

IMAM AL-SHATIBI'S
*Theory of the Higher Objectives
and Intents of Islamic Law*

AHMAD AL-RAYSUNI

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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DR. AHMAD AL-RAYSUNI



With an Introduction by
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Translated from the Arabic by
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FOREWORD



Of knowledge, we have none, save what
You have taught us. (The Qur'an 2:32)

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has great pleasure in presenting this scholarly work on the topic of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* (the higher objectives and intents of Islamic Law). The author, Dr. Ahmad Raysuni, is a well-known scholar and specialist in the field. The Arabic edition of his work, entitled, *Nazariyat al-Maqasid*, was originally published by the Institute in 1991, and marked the first in a series of studies produced by the IIIT on this important subject. This is a work of serious and careful scholarship and we hope that this English edition, with its important analysis and ideas, will not only make an important contribution to the field of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, but also attract wider attention and generate greater interest among readers.

Since few works, if any, are available in the English language on this important subject, *al-maqāṣid*, the IIIT decided to fill the vacuum by initiating the translation and publication of a series of books on the subject to introduce this important area of thought to English readers. In addition to this particular volume the series so far includes: *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* by Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur, and *Taf‘il Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* by Jamal Attiyah. Although the topic is a complex and intellectually challenging one, it needs to be emphasized that these books are not for specialists, scholars and intellectuals alone, but works that also provide very interesting and useful reading for the general reader. Knowledge of *al-Maqāṣid* is a prerequisite for any attempt to address and resolve contemporary issues challenging Islamic thought. Indeed such knowledge can help in the process of developing a much needed

objectives-based fiqh for minorities; and is essential for anyone who is interested in understanding and appreciating the concept of divine wisdom underlying Islamic rulings.

Not only are the ideas presented in this work subtle and challenging but equally challenging has been our effort to render the term *Maqāṣid* accurately into English, the Arabic original having a much deeper and more precise level of meaning. The term has largely been translated as “Higher Objectives” throughout the book, although this does not do justice to its proper meaning. Another equally as accurate and relevant a translation of the term which the reader should bear in mind whilst reading, is “intents” although this has been sparingly used.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate sincere and serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. Its programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last twenty four years have resulted in the publication of more than two hundred and fifty titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into several other languages.

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the translator, Nancy Roberts, who throughout the various stages of the book’s production, co-operated closely with the editorial group at the IIIT’s London Office. Ms. Roberts’ accuracy, thorough attention to detail as well as continuous attempts to revise and improve the quality of her translation, is a credit to her. She has managed to render with great lucidity and clarity a very complex subject.

We would also like to thank the editorial and production team at the London Office and those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this book: Shiraz Khan, Dr. Maryam Mahmood, Salma Mirza, and Riyad al-Yemany. May God reward both them, the author, and the translator for all their efforts.

Rabi^c II 1426
June 2005

ANAS S. AL-SHAIKH-ALI
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INTRODUCTION

*Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds
and Prayers and Peace be upon His Messenger,
his household and all his Companions and Followers*

With the end of the early Islamic period, Muslim scholars came to sense that a rift had begun to emerge between the teachings and principles of Islam and Muslims' daily reality and practices. In response, they initiated ongoing efforts to mend this rift and to restore the intimate contact between Muslims and their religion a contact thanks to which first-generation Muslims had been living copies of the Qur'an, as it were, embodying in their lives the refined morals, standards of conduct and ways of dealing with others prescribed in the Book of God.

The most important and salient means by which scholars sought to achieve this goal was that of elucidating the objectives of Islam, the causes behind Islamic legal rulings as well as the intentions and goals which underlie the Shari'ah, or Islamic Law. They made it clear that every legal ruling in Islam has a function which it performs, an aim which it realizes, a cause, be it explicit or implicit, and an intention which it seeks to fulfill, and all of this in order to realize benefit to human beings or to ward off harm or corruption. They showed how these intentions, higher objectives and causes might at times be contained explicitly in the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while at other times, scholars might bring them to light by means of thorough, comprehensive ijtihad* (independent reasoning)¹ based on their understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the evidence provided through the rulings based thereon.

In this manner, through a reexamination and revision of any given ruling, it became possible to derive its basis and to also make clear

the benefits which it helped to realize and the harm it was designed to avert.

In addition, such scholars defined the approaches which lead to the discovery of these objectives, to an understanding of these benefits, and to an identification of the causes underlying Islamic legal rulings. The *uṣūliyyūn** tended to deal with all these themes within the context of their research into the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and their applications of *qiyās*,* or *istiqlāh*.* Some aspects of objectives-based jurisprudence were likewise dealt with in studies concerned with the elucidation of the secrets and wisdom underlying Islamic legislation in a more general sense.² As for the treatment of objectives-based jurisprudence by scholastic theologians, it was, for the most part, negative in its impact.³

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) was established to work toward the fulfillment of two primary objectives:

- (1) To reform Muslims' ways of thinking and to reorder and reformulate their priorities.
- (2) To rebuild the Islamic cultural scheme and to present modern humanistic and social knowledge from an Islamic perspective.

One of the most important means of achieving the first aim, i.e., that of “reforming Muslims’ ways of thinking,” is to help Muslims make the mental transition from a preoccupation with particulars to a concern with universals, from stopping at outward structures to attention to truths and meanings, from imitation and subordination to creativity and authenticity, and from a focus on means and methods to activity for the purpose of achieving intentions and objectives. However, a dynamic, purposeful awareness of these major objectives will only become possible through ongoing academic efforts to clarify these objectives in all their varied aspects and dimensions.

In our introduction to the first book published in the ‘Issues in Islamic Thought’ series, namely, *Hujjiyat al-Sunnah* (The Authority of the Sunnah) by our venerable Abd al-Ghani Abd al-Khalīq, we stated, “This impressive volume offers a decisive word, an irrefutable

argument and an unparalleled academic source of information on the issue of the authoritative nature of the Sunnah. We at the IIIT are hopeful that scholars and researchers will lend their attention with the same depth and academic precision to the service of another, equally significant, issue relating to the Sunnah, namely, the issue of approaches to understanding and studying the Sunnah and the means by which we can find inspiration therein for the solutions, laws, practical concepts and social systems which are needed to achieve the objectives of Islam and to give the Ummah, or Muslim community, an enlightened vision capable of eliminating uncertainty, impotence and hesitation.”⁴

In the first title published in the Institute’s “Research Monograph” series, namely, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī: Manhaj, Baḥth wa Ma‘rifah*, (later translated into English as *Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence*) the writer stresses the “need to take an interest in knowing the aims and purposes [*maqāṣid*] of Shari‘ah, and in developing the study of this matter by setting down rules and guidelines.”⁵ As for the study at hand, that is, *Imam al-Shāṭibī’s Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law* by Ahmad al-Raysuni, it presents a distinctive model relevant to methods of understanding and of studying the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and drawing upon their inspiration and guidance. Indeed, Imam Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790 AH/1388 AC) has become, in the words of Mustafa al-Zarqa, “a bright star which illuminates and inspires studies on the principles and objectives of Islamic Law, making clear the path ahead and providing authoritative support [for their conclusions].”⁶

It would be no exaggeration to say that the most important thing which al-Shāṭibī offers to us, and which he highlights in a uniquely powerful manner, is methods of arriving at a sound, well-founded understanding of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Indeed, the creativity which he exhibited in relation to the objectives of Islamic Law was simply a fruit of these methods and principles. Al-Shāṭibī was fully aware of the significance and academic value of his approach; hence, in his introduction to *al-Muwāfaqāt*, he draws our attention to this solid inductive method, based on the understanding of the Qur’ān and Sunnah, saying that, “When the secret which had been so well

concealed manifested itself, and when God in His Bounty granted me access and guidance to that which He willed to reveal thereof, I continued to record its wonders and gather together its scattered pieces from the most specific to the most general, citing the evidence thereof from the sources of Islamic rulings with attention to every detail. In so doing, I relied upon all-inclusive inferences rather than limiting myself to isolated particulars, demonstrating the textual and rational foundations [of Islamic rulings] to the extent that I was enabled by grace to elucidate the objectives of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.”⁷

Al-Raysuni sheds light on al-Shāṭibī's inductive method, demonstrating both its value and importance. Sound approaches to understanding the Qur'an and Sunnah are promoted in particular by the author's discussion of the issue of *ta'lil*, that is, the practice of identifying the causes underlying Islamic Law and its rulings. Moreover, an important conclusion which grows out of such a discussion – a conclusion whose validity the author defends – is the necessity of receiving texts together with their objectives and allowing interest-based interpretation to be the foundation for our understanding of such texts' meanings and the rulings which we derive from them.

Another issue which this book highlights in the area of approaches to understanding the texts of Islamic Law is the importance of relying on what might be termed legislative universals, and allowing these universals to mediate our understanding and use of particular texts. In other words, it is a matter of basing our understanding of allegorical texts (*al-mutashābihāt*) on those which are of established, self-evident meaning (*al-muḥkamāt*),⁸ and basing our understanding of particulars on our understanding of universals. After all, the universal principles and objectives of Islamic Law are unshakable foundations for every act of *ijtihad* and for all Islamic thought. Hence, the importance of these principles and objectives must be re-established; we must give them a position of primary importance, then allow them to be the basis for all else. This is a step which must be taken if we are going to reshape the Muslim mentality and reorder its criteria and priorities. After all, one of the most salient manifestations of the crisis of the Muslim mind is an imbalance in the standards and priorities on the basis of which it has come to operate. The passing

of the ages has witnessed a process in which some priorities have been magnified at the expense of others, while some values have been given greater importance than they deserve and others less. This may be the phenomenon against which the venerable Companion ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd (RAA)⁹ was cautioning when he said to one of his comrades,

You are living in an age in which scholars of jurisprudence are numerous, while those who recite [and memorize] the Qur'an are few, an age in which the limits set by the Qur'an are preserved in people's memories though its specific words may be lost. It is an age in which those who ask are few,¹⁰ while those who have answers to give are many, in which they prolong prayer while keeping their sermons brief, and in which people show preference for [virtuous] action over whims and desires.¹¹ However, an age is coming in which scholars of jurisprudence will be few, while those who recite and memorize the Qur'an will be many. The words of the Qur'an will be committed to memory while the limits it sets will be lost. Many will be those who ask, but few will be those who have answers to give. Their sermons will be lengthy and their prayers brief, while they show preference for their whims and desires over the virtuous actions they might perform.¹²

Indeed, both our academic and practical lives have been afflicted by many such imbalances and reversals in values and priorities. The numbers of those who recite and memorize the Qur'an are on the rise while those who derive true knowledge and wisdom from it have grown steadily fewer. There is an exaggerated emphasis on mastering forms and utterances, while the meanings which they were meant to convey and the rulings for which they form the basis are lost. Attention is given to appearances and formalities, while objectives and essences are overlooked. Particulars rule the day while universals are, for all practical purposes, forgotten. Traditions based on the example of the Prophet (SAAS)¹³ are put to death while innovations are brought to the fore.

This is an issue with major importance for Muslim scholars and thinkers and those who invite others to embrace the Islamic faith. It

is, in short, the issue of reordering priorities, rebuilding Muslims' system of standards and values and restoring everything to its proper place.

Given this challenge, we have called for a study of the objectives of Islamic Law, and for the laying down of principles or norms for such studies. This book represents a pioneering contribution which, in our view, has made fundamental progress in this sphere by successfully tackling serious, indeed, formidable obstacles and difficulties. The author presents a comprehensive theory of the objectives of Islamic Law in its various aspects, as well as a painstaking study of objectives-based thought as pioneered by the father of objectives-based jurisprudence, namely, Abū Ishaq al-Shāṭibī; in addition, he presents us with an important study of al-Shāṭibī himself which offers a wealth of new, beneficial information about the life, thought and method of this venerable imam.

As for the principles and norms which systematize and lend order to the objectives of Islamic Law, the author has performed a highly beneficial service in this connection in that he has sifted through both *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-Itiṣām* by al-Shāṭibī and extracted from them a wealth of "objectives-related principles." In addition, he has highlighted the means by which we can discern the objectives of the Law-giver, the most important of which by far is that of induction, to which al-Shāṭibī was steadfastly committed and which represents the hallmark of his methodology.¹⁴

In the section entitled "the objectives of Islamic Law and ijtihad," this book takes an important step in the realm of benefiting from the objectives of Islamic Law and of specifying the ways in which such benefit may be derived. And this, indeed, as the author himself notes, is one of the most significant fruits one might hope to reap from the study of these objectives. We stand in urgent need of the ability to engage in objectives-based ijtihad and the objectives-based jurisprudence which Ibn al-Qayyim describes as "a living jurisprudence which enters the heart unannounced." In a chapter entitled, "Consideration of Intentions and Objectives in Verbal Expressions," Ibn al-Qayyim quotes from the book *Muṣannaf Wakī'* that, "Umar once issued a ruling concerning a woman who had said to her husband, 'Give me

a name.’ Hence, he had named her, ‘The kindhearted one.’ ‘No, not that,’ she told him. ‘So what do you want me to call you?’ he asked. She replied, ‘Call me divorced.’ So he said to her, ‘You are divorced, then.’ The woman then came to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and said, ‘My husband has divorced me.’ Her husband then came and related the story to him. In response, ‘Umar forcefully rebuked the woman, then said to her husband ‘Take her by the hand and rebuke her likewise’.” This is the living jurisprudence which enters the heart unannounced. As in the incident of the man who, “overjoyed to have found his lost camel, said, ‘O God, You are my servant and I am Your Lord!’ was not guilty of blasphemy even though he had uttered words which, taken at face value, would have been evidence of blasphemy, since this was not what he intended.”¹⁵

Knowledge of the intention, or higher objectives, of the Lawgiver was the goal of early Muslim scholars just as it was of those who succeeded them. Such thinkers did not allow themselves to be taken captive by words if they perceived an intention or wisdom behind the words which differed from their apparent meaning. Throughout this book, and particularly in the final section, readers will find plentiful examples of this type of “living jurisprudence” side by side with the principles and norms which form its basis.

Most of the jurisprudence which we know today has entered a phase in which it is closer to stagnation and impotence than it is to vitality and effectiveness. The reason for this is that it has lost among other things, the spirit of the Law, that is to say, a living awareness of the objectives of Islamic Law and its associated theory. In a discussion of the causes which underlie the decadence and backwardness of modern jurisprudence, Tunisian scholar and shaykh Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur notes the “failure to investigate the objectives of Islamic Law as evidenced by its rulings.” He goes on to state that “neglect of the objectives of Islamic Law has been a cause of severe stagnation among scholars of jurisprudence and a destructive element leading to the nullification of beneficial rulings. Moreover, the most ominous development to emerge from this stagnation is the legalistic artifices with which jurisprudents are so enamored, albeit some more than others.”¹⁶

Given the foregoing, the revival of an objectives-based jurisprudence is a necessary condition for the renewal of jurisprudence and for the restoration of its role and status. Scholar Allal al-Fasi states,

The small circle of innovative scholars of jurisprudence, small though their numbers may be, constitutes a guarantee that Islamic jurisprudence will go on progressing to the point at which it becomes linked anew with the objectives of Islamic Law and their supporting evidence, and comes to be applied in Muslim courts and lands.¹⁷

The Islamic jurisprudence, which we are seeking to renew and to strengthen, whose purity and vitality we are seeking to restore, and which we seek to link to the objectives and universal principles of Islamic Law, is among the best guarantees that we will be able to establish legal norms for a contemporary Islamic life. The reason for this is that Islamic jurisprudence, with its unlimited comprehensiveness and its authentically Islamic sources and criteria, is the most Islamic of all the Islamic sciences and the furthest from being colored by foreign influence.¹⁸ This important observation is stressed repeatedly by Allal al-Fasi in his book *Difā‘ an al-Shari‘ah*.¹⁹

We may recognize that foreign influence has, to one extent or another, infiltrated a number of weighty Islamic disciplines, examples of which include aspects of scholastic theology that were touched by Greek influences, as well as aspects of Islamic mysticism. Some *uṣūliyyūn*, fascinated by Greek logic, became so enamored of this foreign discipline that they made attempts to combine it with the science of the principles of jurisprudence. In fact, Imam al-Ghazālī went so far as to say that if anyone has failed to master the science of logic, his knowledge is not trustworthy!²⁰ As for Qur’anic interpretation, it constituted a wide-open sphere for the propagation of a variety of sayings and sects, from Judaica to philosophical notions, knowledge of which Ibn Rushd (the grandson) went so far as to say was a must for anyone wishing to understand the objectives of the Qur’ān.²¹

“However,” states Allal al-Fasi, “you will not find the slightest trace of influence by foreign schools of legal thought on Islamic jurisprudence, whether in the area of forms of worship, public and pri-

vate transactions, or any other branch of Islamic Law.”²² Al-Fasi continues, saying, “Hence, if we wish to rebuild Islamic thought on an authentic foundation, then our foremost task is to study Islamic jurisprudence and work to apply it in our courts and our daily transactions.”²³ We construct an objectives-based jurisprudence in order to realize our identity; then, having done so, we build up our contemporary authenticity, we reclaim our role, and we lay the foundations of our cultural experience guided by a culturally relevant jurisprudence.

The International Institute of Islamic Thought will continue, God willing, to present serious, purposeful studies which form the true building blocks for a new Muslim mentality capable of confronting challenges, overcoming obstacles and raising the Muslim nation to a higher plane.

May all praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

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Author's Preface On the Meaning of *Maqāṣid* and the Theory of Higher Objectives

The terms *maqāṣid** *al-Shārīc* (the higher objectives of the Lawgiver), *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic Law), and *al-maqāṣid al-shar'iyyah* (legal objectives) are all terms which are used interchangeably; thus they communicate a single meaning. It is this meaning which I wish to identify in this preface.

As for Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī himself, considered the father of this discipline which focuses on the study of “higher objectives” in the senses referred to above, he showed little concern to provide a definition for the term “legal objectives.” He may have considered the term sufficiently clear not to require definition and, indeed, the term’s meaning becomes abundantly clear to one who reads the section of his book *al-Muwāfaqāt* in which he discusses the subject of the higher objectives of Islamic Law in its various aspects. One reason which may have led al-Shāṭibī not to provide a definition of the term “higher objectives” was the fact that he was addressing his book to scholars well-versed in the sciences of Islamic Law. And in fact, he states this explicitly when he says,

He who wishes to benefit from this book must have a thorough grasp of the science of Islamic Law – both its roots and its branches, both that aspect of it which has been revealed and passed down in textual form, and our understanding and interpretations thereof. Moreover, he must not be disposed to imitation or to clinging obdurately to this or that school.¹

Clearly, no reader who meets these conditions would have required a definition of the term *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, especially in view of the fact that it had been in common use for centuries before the time of al-Shāṭibī.

Nor have I found a definition for the term *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* in the writings of the *uṣūliyyūn* and other scholars who treated the subject in early times. However, I have come across definitions for the term in the writings of some of our modern scholars, and specifically, in the writings of the Tunisian scholar Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur and the Moroccan writer Allal al-Fasi.

Ibn Ashur defines the general higher objectives of Islamic Law as:

The general objectives of Islamic Law are the meanings and wise purposes on the part of the Lawgiver which can be discerned in most or all of the situations to which the Law applies such that they can be seen not to apply exclusively to a particular type of ruling. Included here are the occasions for the Law’s establishment, its overall aim, and the meanings can be discerned throughout the Law. It likewise includes objectives which are not observable in all types of rulings, although they are observable in many of them.²

The general objectives of the Law mentioned by Ibn Ashur are: preservation of order, achievement of benefit and prevention of harm or corruption, establishment of equality among people, causing the Law to be revered, obeyed and effective, and enabling the Ummah to become powerful, respected and confident. In another section of his book he deals with specific objectives, by which he means,

the ways in which the Lawgiver achieves beneficial human objectives or preserves people’s general interests through their private conduct, that is, through the specific acts they engage in. Such specific objectives include every wise purpose reflected in rulings governing people’s behavior, such as ensuring trustworthy conduct through contracts having to do with pledges or security, consolidating domestic and family order through marriage contracts, and preventing long-term harm by allowing for the legitimacy of divorce.³

As for Allal al-Fasi, he has brought together both the general and specific objectives of Islamic Law into a clear, concise definition. He states that, “What is meant by ‘*maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*’ is its purpose or goal, and the underlying reasons which the Lawgiver has placed within each of its rulings.”⁴ Hence, the first half of the definition, namely, “its purpose or goal,” refers to the Law’s general *maqāṣid*, while the phrase, “the underlying reasons which the Lawgiver has placed within each of its rulings” refers to its specific or particular *maqāṣid*.

In a statement which differs little in essence from Ibn Ashur’s definition, Allal al-Fasi affirms that,

The general higher objective of Islamic Law is to populate and civilize the earth and preserve the order of peaceful coexistence therein; to ensure the earth’s ongoing well-being and usefulness through the piety of those who have been placed there as God’s vicegerents; to ensure that people conduct themselves justly, with moral probity and with integrity in thought and action, and that they reform that which needs reform on earth, tap its resources, and plan for the good of all.⁵

After reviewing a number of Qur’anic verses which contain or point to the objectives of the divine laws, al-Fasi concludes: “These verses in their totality make quite clear that the purpose for which the prophets and messengers were sent and for which the divine laws were revealed is to guide human beings into that which will ensure their well-being and righteousness, and to enable them to carry out the responsibility which has been laid upon them.”⁶

Based on the definitions of *al-maqāṣid* provided by Ibn Ashur and Allal al-Fasi,⁷ as well as the various uses of this term and related statements by scholars who have discussed this topic, it may be said that *al-maqāṣid* are the purposes which the Law was established to fulfill for the benefit of humankind. For additional clarification, these may be divided into the following three categories:

(1) General objectives, that is, those which the Law works to achieve in all, or many, areas of legislation. These objectives are illustrated in the examples given by Ibn Ashur and Allal al-Fasi, and will be further clarified in our discussion of the *uṣūliyyūn*. This category

is, for the most part, the one being referred to by those who speak of “the higher objectives of Islamic Law.” It is clear, then, that some of these *maqāṣid* are broader than others; and whatever is broader is also more important. That is to say, those *maqāṣid* which are reflected in all areas of the Law are more inclusive and more important than those which are reflected in many, but not all, of these areas. And this principle applies to the following two categories as well.

(2) Specific objectives, by which we mean those *maqāṣid* which the Law seeks to achieve in a specific area, or in a limited number of comparable areas of Islamic Law. Ibn Ashur, who devotes particular attention to this category of *maqāṣid*, mentions the following types:

- The Lawgiver’s intents in rulings relating to the family
- The Lawgiver’s intents in conduct relating to monetary matters
- The Lawgiver’s intents in transactions related to employment and employees
- Intents related to the judiciary and the giving of testimony
- Intents related to contributions
- Intents related to penalties.

(3) Particular objectives, by which we mean that which the Lawgiver intends through each particular legal ruling, whether it be to command, prohibit, recommend, permit, or identify as undesirable, or to identify something as a condition, a cause, etc. It is to this category of objectives that Allal al-Fasi is referring when he speaks of “the hidden wisdom which the Lawgiver has placed within each of the Law’s rulings.” Moreover, it is to this category of objectives that we can apply the examples cited by Ibn Ashur, in that the purpose served by contracts relating to pledges or security is that of ensuring trustworthy conduct, while the purpose served by marriage contracts is to establish and consolidate the family unit, and the purpose served by allowing for divorce is that of putting a stop to ongoing harm.

Those who have devoted the most attention to this final category of objectives are scholars of jurisprudence, since it is they who specialize in the particulars and details of Islamic Law. Hence, they frequently specify or make mention of these particular objectives in their conclusions and interpretations.

However, they may refer to these objectives by using other terms such as ‘wise purpose’ (*hikmah*), ‘basis’ (*illah*), ‘meaning’ (*ma‘nā*), etc. For this reason, I will pause briefly to clarify the relationships among these terms and their meanings as they relate to the objectives of the Law, *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*.

‘Wise Purpose’ (*Hikmah*) and ‘Basis’ (*Illah*)

In relation to the Lawgiver, the term ‘wisdom,’ or ‘wise purpose’ (*hikmah*) is used synonymously with the term intention (*qaṣd*). It might thus be said, “His intention is such-and-such,” or that “His wise purpose is such-and-such,” both of which mean the same thing. However, jurisprudents tend to use the term ‘wise purpose’ more frequently than the term ‘intention.’ Examples of this include the following statement of Ibn Farḥūn in which he identifies the objectives of the judiciary by saying, “As for its wise purpose, it includes elimination of unrest and disturbances, suppression of acts of wrongdoing, support and protection of the oppressed, putting an end to contention, commanding the doing of what is good, and forbidding the doing of what is evil. This is in agreement with what was said by Ibn Rāshid and others.”⁸

Hence, when jurisprudents and others make use of the term *hikmah*, or ‘wise purpose,’ they are referring to the Lawgiver’s intention. Al-Wansharīsī states that, “*Hikmah* in the terminology of legal scholars means the purpose or intention behind the affirmation or negation of this or that ruling. An example of this would be the hardship on account of which the practice of shortening prayers and breaking one’s fast [while on a journey] was legislated.”⁹ This statement might at first appear to present a problem, namely: Can hardship be said to be ‘a wise purpose’ or an ‘intention’? The solution to this difficulty lies in the fact that there is a phrase omitted from the statement above, since what it means is that the intention and wise purpose behind the ruling is not hardship, but rather, the alleviation of hardship for the traveler.

We are alerted to this fact by the Hanafite jurisprudent Shams al-Dīn al-Fanārī, who states,

When it is said concerning the allowances associated with travel that the cause underlying [such allowances] is travel, and that the wise purpose behind them is hardship, this is metaphorical speech, the meaning of which is that the wise purpose for which such allowances are made is to alleviate the hardship entailed by the journey.¹⁰

Badran Abu al-Aynayn Badran affirms this parallel between ‘intention’ and ‘wise purpose’ in the nomenclature of jurisprudents and others. He states, “The majority of jurisprudents used to conclude in their interpretations that the rulings which God had legislated had been laid down only in the interest of achieving some benefit for [people] or protecting them from some harm. Consequently, this interest was the goal which the legislation was intended to achieve, and is termed ‘wise purpose.’”¹¹ He then adds, “As for the wise purpose behind the ruling, it is that which gives rise to its legislation, and the benefit which the Lawgiver intends to achieve through said ruling.”¹²

After tracing the use of the term ‘wise purpose’ in the writings of the *uṣūliyyūn*, Abd al-Aziz al-Rabiah notes that they use the term in two senses. He states, “According to the first sense of the term, ‘wise purpose’ is the intention behind the issuance of the ruling in question. In other words, it is the benefit which the Lawgiver intends to achieve or enhance through this ruling, or the harm which the Lawgiver intends, through this ruling, to prevent or minimize.”¹³ As for the second sense of the term ‘wise purpose,’ it is “the occasion suited to the legislation of the ruling, that is, that which calls for or requires it, such as hardship.”¹⁴ Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that this second sense is subsumed under the first, since it is, as al-Fanārī points out, a metaphorical statement. This observation will likewise be confirmed in our discussion of the term ‘basis’ (*‘illah*).

As for the term ‘basis’ (*‘illah*), it is a multifaceted one. It has been put to a variety of uses and been the subject of no little debate and discussion. However, what concerns us here is that the term ‘basis’ is used to refer to the Lawgiver’s intention, and in this sense is synonymous with the term ‘wise purpose.’ This is the original, and most

accurate, use of the term *'illah*. Subsequently, however, it came to be used primarily to refer to the observable, identifiable condition or situation upon which legal rulings are based, since the ‘wise purpose,’ that is, the basis and intent behind a given ruling is, in reality, linked in most cases to an observable, identifiable situation or condition to which people’s attention may easily be drawn when instructing them concerning the Lawgiver’s rulings or precepts.

In the area of allowances, for example, there can be no doubt that relieving people of hardship is the wise purpose and intention behind such legal allowances and, hence, their true basis. However, the Lawgiver does not say to those bound by the Law: “Whenever you suffer hardship or difficulty, avail yourselves of allowances.” Rather, He specifies recognizable indications and particular occasions – such as travel, illness, incapacity, dire need and duress – which the *uṣūliyyūn* refer to as “observable, identifiable conditions,” and it is upon these that the allowances are based. As for the other, innumerable, forms of hardship that people might suffer, they are not identified by the Lawgiver; rather, He has left it to those qualified to engage in *ijtihad* and issue legal decisions (*fatāwā*, singular, *fatwa*) and those who have received special authority from God to assess such hardships and whatever allowances they merit.

Other examples of relevance here are those associated with the various actions required to achieve ritual purity, such as minor and major ritual ablutions (*wudū'* and *ighṭisāl*), cleaning one’s teeth and gums with a toothpick, cleanliness of body and clothing, etc. There can be no doubt that the wise purpose and intent, that is, the true basis for rulings relevant to ritual purity is to promote sound hygienic practices¹⁵ among people. Nevertheless, the Lawgiver does not say: “Whenever you become dirty or have contact with ritually impure substances, perform the required ablutions,” since this would not be sufficiently subject to measurement or observation.

Consequently, the Lawgiver has linked all rulings related to ritual purity to observable, identifiable causes or conditions which recur on a regular basis in people’s lives – such as excretion of substances through the anus or urethra, menstruation, sleep¹⁶ or sexual intercourse – and which therefore lead sufficiently to the achievement of

the rulings' intent or purpose.

These observable, identifiable situations or conditions – which also might be termed ‘indications’ – are referred to as bases (*‘ilal*) or reasons (*asbāb*), even though the true basis or reason is the intent and wise purpose which gave rise to the ruling, namely, to bring benefit and/or avert harm. The Lawgiver links the relevant rulings to observable, identifiable indications in order to avoid ambiguity and confusion in the Law. Such indications are generally associated with the benefits or causes of harm which constitute the true basis for the legislation; therefore, they may be thought of as their probable cause or occasion. Al-Shāṭibī states, “Rather than addressing us in terms of His wise purpose, the Lawgiver has specified probable causes as a means of rendering Islamic Laws as precise as they can possibly be.”¹⁷

Muhammad Mustafa Shalabi has identified three primary ways in which the term *‘illah* has been used by *uṣūliyyūn*. He states,

The term *‘illah* has been used to refer to the following: (1) benefit or harm resulting from an action, (2) the achievement of benefit or the prevention of harm resulting from the legislation of a given ruling, and (3) the observable, identifiable condition or situation on the basis of which a given ruling is legislated for human beings' benefit. It is thus valid to use the term *‘illah* to convey any of these three meanings. Scholars engaged in the establishment of terminology subsequently restricted the use of this term to refer to the observable, identifiable condition or situation upon which a ruling is based. However, they made clear that this was a figurative use of the term, since it is, in fact, simply an outward measure of the ruling's true basis. Meanwhile, they used the term *hikmah*, or ‘wise purpose’ to refer to the benefit or harm resulting from an action, with the recognition that it is this ‘wise purpose’ which represents the true basis for the ruling.¹⁸

Consequently, we find that al-Shāṭibī, who was predisposed to reviving the old, original meanings of terms, chose to define and use the term *‘illah* with its original, most accurate meaning. He therefore, states,

...And as for the term *'illah*, what it refers to¹⁹ is the wise purposes and benefits associated with commands or rulings permitting this or that action, as well as the sources of harm or corruption associated with prohibitions. Hardship,²⁰ then, is a basis (*'illah*) which underlies the allowance of shortening one's prayers or breaking one's fast when on a journey.²¹ Hence, travel has been established as a reason for the allowance. In general, then, the *'illah* is the benefit itself or the harm itself – not its probable cause or occasion – be it observable and identifiable or not. Similarly, in relation to the saying of the Prophet, “No judge should issue rulings when he is angry,”²² we say that anger is a reason or cause (*sabab*), while the clouding of one's judgment in such a way that one is unable to do justice to the arguments being presented²³ is the *'illah*, or basis [for the ruling]. Even so, the term *sabab* might be applied here to the *'illah* itself due to the closeness of the link between them, and without there being any doubt concerning the appropriateness of the term.²⁴

Hence, al-Shāṭibī interprets the term *'illah* to mean the benefit which a ruling aims to achieve or the harm which it aims to prevent. In addition to its being consistent with the term's original usage, this interpretation is the most fitting for those engaged in the study of the objectives of Islamic Law, since the study of these objectives is the study of the true bases for legal rulings. After all, these bases are themselves the objectives which legal rulings are intended to fulfill regardless of whether or not they are observable or subject to precise identification. As for the matter of observability and precise identification, they become necessary (only) when one is engaging in the process of drawing particular analogies (between one ruling and another) and when presenting rulings to the general public.

Out of this original meaning of the term *'illah* grew the companion term *ta'līl* in its general sense, namely, that of interpreting the rulings of Islamic Law in terms of the benefits which they bring and the harm which they prevent. If we wished to identify a clear synonym for the term *ta'līl* which would both be appropriate to the theme of the objectives of Islamic Law and help us to avoid the controversy which once raged over the question of *ta'līl*,²⁵ the word

which would best fit our purpose would be (*taqṣīd*) (derived, as it is, from the same root as the noun *qaṣd*, or intention), since the practice of *ta‘līl* is, in reality, that of identifying the intentions that are behind Islamic legal rulings.

Al-Shāṭibī used the term *taqṣīd* only once, near the end of the third part of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, in the context of warning against the presumptuousness of those who interpret God’s speech and specify its meanings based on mere conjecture. For in point of fact, a commentator’s interpretation of the Qur’ān is,

an act of identifying the speaker’s intentions. The Qur’ān is the speech of God; hence, such a person is saying, in effect: this is what God intended to say through this or that statement. Let such a person beware of having God Almighty ask him: On what basis did you say this about Me? After all, such a person has no right to make such objectives without bringing forth evidence. Otherwise, he should content himself with a statement of probability, as when someone says: It probably means such-and-such...²⁶

Objectives and Meanings

The term ‘meanings’, or its singular, ‘meaning’, is another of the expressions which have been used frequently to refer to the objectives of Islamic Law, particularly on the part of jurisprudents. They say, for example, “This ruling was legislated for the sake of this meaning,” or that, “The meaning underlying this ruling is such-and-such...”.

As we have seen, Ibn Ashur defines the objectives of Islamic Law as “meanings and wise purposes...” As for al-Shāṭibī, he frequently uses the term ‘meanings’ to speak of the objectives of Islamic Law. He says, for example, “Legal actions [rulings] are not intended for their own sake. Rather, they are intended to serve other ends, namely, their meanings. And these meanings are the interests for the sake of which they were legislated.”²⁷

We find this usage also in the writings of al-Ghazālī, who states, for example that “generally speaking what we understand the Companions of the Prophet [*Sahābah*] to have done is to adhere to the

meanings [of the Law], restricting themselves in their perception of such meanings to the commonly held point of view without requiring absolute certainty.”²⁸

Prior to al-Ghazālī we find this term used regularly by his Shaykh, Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwainī, Imam of the Two Holy Shrines, and particularly in the section of his book *al-Burhān* entitled “*Istidlāl*.^{*} One notes, however, that al-Juwainī used the terms ‘meaning’ and ‘meanings’ in a broader sense such that they included what are referred to today as principles and values as well as interests in general.

Moreover, we find that prior to either al-Ghazālī or al-Juwainī, al-Ṭabarī used the term ‘meanings’ as an exact synonym of ‘objectives.’ Hence, he specified two primary objectives of zakah, saying, “The proper understanding of this, as I see it, is that God has established alms with two meanings [i.e., with two objectives]. The first of these is to meet Muslims’ needs, while the other is to assist and strengthen Islam...”²⁹ The full text of this statement by al-Ṭabarī will be quoted in the final chapter of this book, God willing, with explanation and commentary.

It will be clear from the foregoing examples, as well as others, that the use of the terms ‘meaning’ and ‘meanings’ was quite prevalent among early scholars, after which they were gradually replaced by the terms ‘basis’ (*‘illah*), ‘wise purpose’ (*ḥikmah*) and also ‘intent’ (*maqṣūd*). This is confirmed by the words of Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī and clarified by his commentator, Abd al-Aziz al-Bukhari. In the course of defining jurisprudence and listing the various categories thereof, al-Bazdawī states, “The second of these categories is mastering the knowledge thereof, namely, the knowledge of [Islamic] texts and their meanings.”³⁰

Abd al-Aziz al-Bukhari, states,

The term ‘meanings’ refers to both linguistic meaning and legal meanings, the latter of which are referred to as ‘bases’ (*‘ilal*, singular, *‘illah*). The pious ancestors did not use the term *‘illah*; rather, they used the term ‘meaning’ based on the words of the Prophet, “No Muslim’s blood may lawfully be shed unless the action is founded on one of three meanings,” that is, three bases. The fact that the word ‘meanings’ refers

to bases here is supported by the use of the feminine (*iḥdā*) for the word ‘one,’ as well as the use of the masculine form of ‘three’ (*thalāth*).³¹

Ibn Hazm, with his uncompromising literalism (*Zāhiriyah**), objected strenuously to the use of the term ‘meanings’ to refer to the wise purposes and bases underlying Islamic Law. It is as though he saw this use of the term as a step away from an adherence to the apparent meanings of Islamic Law texts and toward the practice of identifying the causes behind them, which would have severely undermined Ibn Hazm’s literalist point of view. Consequently, with his accustomed vehemence, he went on the offensive against those who referred to bases (*‘ilal*) with the term ‘meanings.’ He states,

There are some who, in their inveterate propensity for trouble-making and their corrupt attachments, have referred to [*‘ilal*] as ‘meanings.’ A ‘meaning,’ however, is an explication of a term or expression, as when someone says, “What is the meaning of the word *ḥarām* [forbidden]?” to which someone else replies, “It means whatever it is not permissible to do.” Or when one person asks, “What is the meaning of the word *fard* [duty]?” to which another replies, “It is everything which it is not permissible to neglect.” Similarly, one might ask, “What is a scale?” to which another replies, “It is an instrument by means of which one can determine the difference between objects’ weights.” These, and similar examples, illustrate the term ‘meanings.’³²

Hence, whatever one might have to say in response to Ibn Hazm’s literalist stance, he tacitly affirms what we have been saying regarding the use of the term ‘meanings’ to refer to the objectives of Islamic legal rulings.

There are, in addition, other terms which are used occasionally to refer to the objectives of Islamic Law, such as *gharad*, *murād* and *maghzā*, and which will be discussed below. There are, of course, distinctions to be found among these terms despite the fact that they are used to refer to similar, overlapping concepts; such distinctions, however, are not my concern here.

The Meaning of “Objectives Theory”

(*Nazariyyat al-Maqāṣid*)

The term ‘theory’ is a modern one which is used with a variety of meanings. Jamil Saliba makes mention of five such meanings, two of which approach most closely the denotation which I intend to convey through the term. Saliba explains these meanings as follows:

If the term ‘theory’ is applied to that which stands in contrast to common knowledge, it refers to the object of a systematic, coordinated conceptualization which, in form, is subject to certain scientific specifications of which the majority of people would be unaware. If, on the other hand, it is applied to that which stands in contrast to particular facts, it refers to a broad composite which aims to explain a large number of phenomena...³³

Murad Wahbah considers the term ‘theory’ to be “synonymous with the term ‘system’,”³⁴ the latter of which he defines as “a set of issues or questions arranged in a particular order.”

All of these meanings, then, are included in the concept of objectives theory. If Islamic legal rulings, together with the detailed evidence upon which they rest, are viewed as ‘particular facts,’ then the objectives theory is the overall framework which lends them order, bringing together their scattered pieces, as it were, coordinating them, and giving them – despite their dissimilarity and variety – a single dimension and a uniform meaning. Moreover, if the rulings of Islamic Law and their associated evidence give rise to questions concerning the principles of Islamic Law, legislative theories and principles of jurisprudence, then the objectives theory likewise lends order to all of these issues, theories and principles, arranging them in a particular order and rendering them a single body, each part of which serves all others.

Wahbah al-Zuhayli devotes Part IV of his major work, *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu* to a discussion of theories of jurisprudence. He defines what he means by theory of jurisprudence as follows: “A theory is a general concept which constitutes an objective juristic system

comprised of particulars which fall within the various categories of jurisprudence, such as the theory of rights, the theory of guarantees, and the theory of legal necessity..." Then, in speaking of the distinction between a theory and a principle, he states, "A theory is an overall structure for issues which are linked by a common broad concept. As for a principle, it is a universal norm or standard relating to a particular aspect of the general theory."³⁵

Based on the foregoing, it may be said that a theory is broader and more inclusive than a principle, and that a theory is comprised of a number of principles. However, the objectives theory encompasses both juristic theories and juristic principles, as well as particular rulings. Hence, if a theory of jurisprudence is, as Jamal al-Din Atiyyah states, "a mental conceptualization which has been arrived at through a process of sequential, logical thought or through inductive reasoning based on particular subsidiary rulings,"³⁶ then the theory of objectives rests on both of these foundations, i.e., logical, sequential thought arising from rational investigation and the doctrinal foundations of Islam, and inductive conclusions.

The theory of objectives is generated by sound, rational investigation based on the belief that the Law of God can be nothing other than a law of wisdom and mercy, justice and equity, judicious planning and accurate assessment, since it is on the basis of these qualities that God deals with all His creatures, and since they are necessitated by the Divine perfections.

The theory of higher objectives is supported by an inductive analysis of the details of Islamic Law. Thus, whoever examines the rulings of Islamic Law and its texts in their various aspects and fields will perceive many of the Law's foundations, objectives and wise purposes. Moreover, whoever pauses to reflect on the outcomes and effects of such rulings will see the benefits which they bring and the harm which they prevent and, as a consequence, will emerge with a comprehensive, integrated conceptualization of the objectives and goals of Islamic Law which, in turn, go to make up the theory of objectives.

In addition to the foregoing, the theory of objectives finds powerful support in those texts which are recognized as definitive – in

terms of the clarity of their meaning, the authenticity of their content and the reliable manner in which they have come down to us – and which provide evidence for the occasions for the sending of God's messengers, the revelation of divine scriptures, and the establishment of divine laws. Such occasions make clear to us that through each of these acts God's intention has been to bestow mercy on all of His creatures: by instructing people and purifying their hearts, establishing justice and equity among them, and preserving their authentic nature.

Resting on this foundation, the theory of objectives governs the details of Islamic Law, giving direction to every understanding and independent interpretation thereof. The point of departure in this process is the unqualified recognition that the Law was established to achieve benefit for people and to protect them from harm both in this world and the next. 'Benefit' and 'harm' as defined in the context of the objectives of Islamic Law are based on a specific concept with its own unique distinguishing features. The benefit spoken of here is not, for example, simply the gratification of impelling desires or short-lived caprices; rather, the concept of 'benefit' or 'interest' in Islam is more far-reaching and sublime than the superficial, inadequate concepts thereof which are so prevalent today. It is based on this understanding that the theory of objectives defines the scale of benefits in Islam, from the 'essential' (*darūriyyah*), to the 'necessary' (*hājiyyah*), to the 'complementary' (*takmīliyyah*). As we shall see below in our discussion of the commentaries and additions with which al-Shāṭibī explicated his ideas, this theory branches out further and further, spreading its leafy boughs over virtually all questions pertaining to the Law and its various particulars.

This is the theory to which al-Shāṭibī devoted his life: defining its parameters, highlighting its distinguishing features, defending its importance and championing the necessity of its application. Al-Shāṭibī was, of all those who have contributed to the study of Islamic Law and its objectives, the one who most valiantly plumbed their depths, then presented us with their precious pearls and helped us to reap their fruits. Hence, following the preface in which I review the notion of 'objectives' as found in the writings of the *uṣūliyyūn** and

in the Malikite school of jurisprudence, I have included a chapter on al-Shāṭibī and his writings – an addition which I view as essential given the fact that what has been written about him thus far is still exceedingly sparse, and this despite the tremendous esteem and interest which al-Shāṭibī has come to enjoy. Indeed, who could fittingly undertake a study of the objectives of Islamic Law without also undertaking an in-depth study of the objectives which were dearest to al-Shāṭibī's own heart? For if the truth be told, research into the objectives of Islamic Law has, to this day, still not matched, much less surpassed, what al-Shāṭibī achieved in this sphere.

It is my hope that this study will constitute a helpful stepping stone along the path leading to a mature understanding of *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* as formulated by al-Shāṭibī, and to continued progress in the study of these objectives in all their aspects.

*Oh God, please receive our efforts;
You are, indeed, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.*

I

The Notion of Higher Objectives Prior to al-Shāṭibī

Although this study is devoted to the theory of *al-maqāṣid* as formulated by Abū Ishaq al-Shāṭibī, there is benefit to be had from reviewing what was written prior to al-Shāṭibī's time on the objectives of Islamic Law. Specifically, such a review will stand to benefit us in the following ways:

1. By providing an objective historical introduction to al-Shāṭibī's theory. In other words, before delving in detail with him into issues relating to the objectives of Islamic Law, we will be enabled to approach the topic gradually by way of certain introductions relating to the topic at hand.
2. By shedding light on the steps which were taken before al-Shāṭibī toward uncovering the objectives of Islamic Law and revealing their overall importance, a process which will allow us to place everything in its proper perspective and give everyone his due.
3. By placing a finger, as it were, on the roots and sources of al-Shāṭibī's theory, which will then help us to perceive the extent to which both tradition and originality contributed to its final form.

In order to achieve the second and third benefits, it will be necessary throughout this study to engage in frequent, if brief, comparisons between al-Shāṭibī and other thinkers, which I will attempt to clarify and summarize in the latter parts of the book.

The natural sphere for attention to the objectives of Islamic Law is that of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*^{*}) and its fundamentals (*uṣūl al-fiqh*^{*}); concern for these objectives is evidenced in the work of both *fuqahā'*^{*} and *uṣūliyyūn*, the former group's emphasis being upon detail and practical application, and the latter's on theorization and the laying of foundations. It follows, then, that al-Shāṭibī would have drawn on the work of both these groups, building on the foundations they had laid and treading the paths they had forged. It likewise follows that in the following pages we will need to lend attention to the work of both these groups of scholars; hence, I have divided the present chapter into two sections: (1) The notion of 'objectives' as treated by the *uṣūliyyūn*, and (2) The notion of 'objectives' in the Malikite school. My choice of the phrase 'in the Malikite school' rather than 'in the writings of jurisprudents' is based, firstly, on the fact that the fiqh-related aspect of al-Shāṭibī's thought is restricted, for the most part, to the Malikite school and Malikite fiqh, or jurisprudence; and secondly, on the special relationship which can be observed between the Malikite school and the theme of the objectives of Islamic Law.

After considerable hesitation, I have chosen to begin with the *uṣūliyyūn*, that is, scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and this despite the fact that the science of fiqh preceded that of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Similarly, I have made this choice despite my conviction that the *fuqahā'* demonstrate greater awareness of and concern for the objectives of Islamic Law than do the *uṣūliyyūn*. This choice is based on the fact that it was the *uṣūliyyūn*, rather than the *fuqahā'*, who first brought to light and drew attention to the objectives of Islamic Law. For while the *fuqahā'* were engaged in building up the edifice of Islamic jurisprudence and applying its objectives in the practical sphere, the *uṣūliyyūn* were highlighting the features of this edifice and describing its foundations and supports.

We can thus assume that al-Shāṭibī's attention was first drawn to the objectives of Islamic Law through the writings of the *uṣūliyyūn*. Indeed, whoever reads any of the classic works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, or even any of their abridged versions or marginal glosses, will come across the notion of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* and realize that they help to

make this or that clearer or more precise, to determine which of two rulings or points of view has more evidence in its favor, etc., whereas one might study scores of books on the topic and master the contents of scores of fiqh-related categories, yet without discovering that there is a ‘spirit’ which flows throughout the categories and particulars of Islamic jurisprudence, a spirit which benefits, directs and informs them. This ‘spirit’ is the objectives of the Lawgiver in establishing the Law. Moreover, even if, after long experience with such texts, one were to make such a discovery, it would remain sufficiently cryptic and fragmented that he or she would need several further rounds of study and investigation to gain a firm grasp of it.

On the basis of this assumption, then, I have deemed it preferable to begin with the *uṣūliyyūn*, a preference which is further supported by the fact that overall treatments or discussions of *maqāṣid* are the province, not of the *faqīh*, that is, the scholar of fiqh, but of the *uṣūlī*,* that is, the scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. In addition, it might be noted that by beginning with the *uṣūliyyūn*, we are beginning with the global, foundational aspect of the objectives of Islamic Law, after which we may move more easily into the realm of detail and illustrative examples. Such a choice remains, of course, simply a matter of organization and structure.

[I]

The Notion of Higher Objectives as Treated by the *Uṣūliyyūn*

Before making mention of the most conspicuous links in the chain of thinkers who contributed to the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh* by broaching the subject of *al-maqāṣid* and clarifying some aspects thereof – including, to begin with, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī – I would like to point out that the scholars of whom I make mention were undoubtedly preceded by still others, not only in their awareness of the objectives of Islamic Law but, in addition, in the great academic strides which they took in jurisprudence and its principles as a whole. Even so, I

have limited myself to particular examples of *uṣūliyyūn* who have discussed the objectives of Islamic Law, and this for the following reasons:

1. These thinkers absorbed and brought together in their writings a vast number of views, interpretations and theories which had gained circulation before them.
2. A large number of the writings dealing with the principles of jurisprudence during the 3rd and 4th Centuries AH are no longer extant.
3. My concern in this and other chapters is with what has been actually written down concerning the objectives of Islamic Law. As for that which was not committed to writing, it does not fall within the purview of this study unless there is some reference to it in the works to be discussed.
4. The material to be treated here includes only that which I have gained access to or of which I have knowledge. Indeed, the topic of concern here spans a period of several centuries, a thorough treatment of which requires extensive effort.

Earlier Links

Before examining the traditional *uṣūl*-related chain of transmission, which goes back in clear, continuous succession from al-Ghazālī and his shaykh, al-Juwainī, to Ibn al-Subkī and his shaykh, al-Subkī senior, it is important that we pause to introduce and draw attention to still earlier links in the same chain of knowledge and learning. Of these links, I will limit myself to some of the most renowned scholars and *uṣūliyyūn* who had a clear impact on the topic at hand, or who exerted a major influence over those who succeeded them in the discussion of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*. Given our awareness of such thinkers, we have no choice but to assume that what was said by later scholars concerning the objectives of Islamic Law may well have been stated earlier, or at the very least, prepared for, by their predecessors.

Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī (Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī)

There has been no little disagreement concerning al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī's date of death; it is agreed that he lived during the 3rd Century AH, though the question remains as to whether he lived only till the latter part of the 3rd Century or whether he survived into the early part of the 4th Century.

Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī may have been neither a jurisprudent (*faqīh*) nor a scholar of the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūlī*) in the specialized sense of these terms; rather, he was known as a Sufi and a philosopher (hence the epithet *al-hakīm*, 'the sage'). Nevertheless, he deserves mention in this context; indeed, he must be mentioned as one of the foremost scholars who concerned themselves with the objectives of Islamic Law, albeit in his own distinctive way. Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī is among the scholars who devoted the most careful attention to unearthing the bases for Islamic legal rulings and searching for their hidden wisdom. He was one of the first scholars to employ the term *maqāṣid* and may, in addition, have been the first to write a book specially devoted to this topic. He included the term *maqāṣid* in the title to his book, *al-Ṣalāh wa Maqāṣiduhā* (Ritual Prayer and Its Objectives), which is, fortunately, extant and in print.¹ Though it tends in its analyses of the bases of legal rulings toward an approach which is more experiential and figurative than it is precise and academic, this book nevertheless goes to the heart of our topic of investigation. The following are examples of al-Tirmidhī al-Hakīm's analysis and explanation of the objectives of prayer, both its verbal content and its physical gestures.

By the remembrance of God the heart is refreshed² and softened, but by the remembrance of one's passions and appetites it grows hard and dry. The heart may be likened to a tree which derives its moisture and suppleness from water: If it is too preoccupied with its appetites to remember God, it is as if it had been deprived of water. As a consequence, its roots dry up and its branches wither. If it is not watered, it will be beset by the summer heat and its branches will become dry and brittle; then, if you draw one of its branches toward you, it will fail to

bend and, instead, break off. Such a tree is good for nothing but to be cut down and become fuel for the fire. So also will the heart grow dry and brittle if it lacks the remembrance of God: It will be afflicted by the heat of the soul and the pleasures of the appetites, as a result of which one's bodily members will be too brittle to bend to God's will and will cease obeying Him. If you bend them they will break, and will be good for nothing but to become tinder for the Great Fire.³

He then continues,

Every prayer is an act of repentance, while the period between one prayer and the next is a time of heedlessness and alienation, of lapses and sins. By virtue of heedlessness one grows distant from his Lord, and when he grows distant he is filled with wantonness and pride, since he lacks reverence and fear. By virtue of alienation he becomes a stranger; by virtue of his lapses he falls and his foot slips and breaks; and by virtue of sins, he removes himself from a place of safety and is taken captive by the enemy.

The motions of prayer reflect different states in which the servant finds himself or herself. By standing [in preparation for prayer] one ceases to be a fugitive; this is because, when one's bodily members are free to do as they please, the spirit of servanthood is weakened and one flees from one's Master. However, when one stands in His presence, one gathers one's members together again and places oneself in the position of a servant. By facing the *qiblah*, one ceases turning away from and spurning [God]. By uttering the words, '*Allāhu akbar*' [God is Greatest], one abandons arrogant pride. By uttering words of praise to God, one abandons heedlessness. By reciting passages from the Qur'an, one surrenders oneself anew and renews one's acceptance of the covenant which binds one to God. Through the act of bowing, one is delivered from alienation. By prostrating, one is delivered from guilt, by coming up again into a sitting position to utter the confessions of faith, one is delivered from perdition, and by uttering the closing phrase, '*Al-salāmu 'alaykum wa rāḥmatu Allāh*' [May peace be upon you, and the mercy of God], one is delivered from the supreme peril.⁴

He then proceeds, in the remaining chapters of the book, to detail all of these symbolic meanings.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī wrote another book which appears to be based on the same model as his book on prayer and its objectives, namely, *al-Hajj wa Asrāruhu* (The Pilgrimage and Its Secrets). This latter book appears not to have been edited and published; however, we have been assured that it exists in manuscript form.⁵

However, perhaps the most important of al-Tirmidhī's writings relating to our topic is the book referred to variously as *al-'Ilal*, *'Ilal al-Shari'ah*, and *'Ilal al-'Ubūdiyyah*, which Muhammad Uthman al-Khasht describes as an attempt by al-Tirmidhī "to identify the bases of Islamic religious obligations through a process of reasoning."⁶ Al-Khasht may have relied for this information on the passage in *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyyah* which states that, "In his books *'Ilal al-'Ubūdiyyah*, *Sharḥ al-Ṣalāh* and *al-Hajj wa Asrāruhu*, al-Tirmidhī wished to offer a rational explanation for the legal obligations in Islam."⁷

Sadly, the book *'Ilal al-'Ubūdiyyah*, which al-Subkī refers to as *'Ilal al-Shari'ah*, is mentioned nowhere among the sources I consulted as being extant. All that is said about it is that it – together with his book *Khatm al-Wilāyah*⁸ – was the cause of the persecution to which he was subjected and his banishment from Tirmidh.⁹ It may be for this reason that it was destroyed at an early date.

Among the works which confirm al-Tirmidhī's pioneering role in general is his book entitled *al-Furūq*, about which al-Subkī states, "There is nothing comparable to it on this subject. In it he distinguishes between terms such as *al-mudārāh* and *al-mudāhanah* (flattery, fawning); *al-muḥājjah* and *al-mujādalah* (argument, dispute); *al-munāẓarah* and *al-mughālabah* (debate, contest); and *al-intiṣār* and *al-intiqām* (victory, retaliation), as well as other semantically similar terms."¹⁰ It appears that al-Qarāfī took the idea for his own book, as well as its title, from this work of al-Tirmidhī's!

Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333 AH/944 AC)

Imam al-Māturīdī needs no introduction; suffice it to say that large

numbers of Muslim scholars and lay people are associated to this day with his school of theology. Virtually all of the Hanafites pledge allegiance to this theological school, as do other people of learning.

Of concern to me here, however, is that this illustrious Sunni imam composed works on the principles of jurisprudence which are now lost. Given al-Māturīdī's standing and religious leadership, we hold such works of his in the highest esteem, especially in view of the early period in which he composed them. The most important of these works may be his book *Ma'khad al-Sharā'i'* (The Sources of Religious Laws). According to one student of Abū Manṣūr's life and the academic contributions which he left to posterity, this book – as well as other works of his on the principles of jurisprudence – is counted among al-Māturīdī's lost writings. After discussing the writings of al-Māturīdī, particularly his commentary entitled, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*, Fath Allah Khalif states, “Time has preserved this commentary for us, as well as his books *al-Tawḥīd* and *al-Maqālāt*. As for his other books, however, they have all been lost.”¹¹

Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (al-Qaffāl al-Kabīr)
(d. 365 AH/975 AC)

A prominent early scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, al-Shāshī was the undisputed religious authority among the Shāfi'ites of his day. His writings include *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Fundamentals of Jurisprudence) and *Mahāsin al-Shari'ah* (Beauties of the Shari'ah), the latter of which in particular bears a clear link to the theme of *maqāṣid*, since one can only highlight the beauties of Islamic Law by revealing its wise purposes and objectives. This book's importance is confirmed by the fact that Ibn al-Qayyim mentions it and speaks highly of it.¹² This fact also makes it appear likely that this book remained extant at least until the time of Ibn al-Qayyim.

Abū Bakr al-Abharī (d. 375 AH/985 AC)

The most significant thing which will be noted by whoever studies the biography¹³ of al-Abharī is that he combined a thorough grasp of jurisprudence with an equally thorough, well-founded knowledge

of its principles, and is known to have written in both fields. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says of him, “Among his writings are those in which he explains and defends the Malikite school’s teachings by refuting those who disagree with them.”¹⁴ His writings on the principles of jurisprudence include *Kitāb al-Uṣūl*, *Kitāb al-Ijmā’ Ahl al-Madīnah*, as well as, in my estimation, his book *Mas’alat al-Jawāb wa al-Dalā’il wa al-‘Ilal*. If this book was, as it appears to have been, on the fundamentals of jurisprudence, then the word ‘ilal has its own special significance for our topic.

Another notable aspect of al-Abhārī’s biography is the tremendous esteem which he enjoyed among scholars of virtually all schools of jurisprudence. In fact, it has been said of him – among other things – that whenever a disagreement arose between the Shāfi’ites and the Ḥanafites concerning the statements made by their respective imams, they would consult him and defer to his point of view.¹⁵ As for the Malikites, he was their undisputed imam.

However, what most arrested my attention in relation to this man was the multitude of outstanding *fuqahā’* and *uṣūliyyūn* who were influenced by his thought, scholars who themselves exercised far-reaching influence both in their own generations and in the generations which succeeded them. Indeed, al-Qādī ‘Iyād states, “None of the scholars in all of Iraq – after Ismā’īl al-Qādī – produced the likes of what was produced by Abū Bakr al-Abhārī.”¹⁶

Al-Abhārī’s most renowned disciples include Imam al-Asīlī, Ibn Khuwayyiz Mindād, al-Ḥasan ibn al-Qaṣṣār, al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and al-Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī the last of whom is the best known and most important to our study.

Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH/1112 AC)

Titled ‘*Shaykh al-Sunnah wa Lisān al-Ummah*,’ that is, ‘the Shaykh of the Sunnah and Spokesman for the Muslim Nation,’ al-Bāqillānī was the religious leader of his day,¹⁷ and is looked upon as having been the reformer of the 4th Century of Islam. Such indications alone should suffice as evidence of the man’s stature as well as the life of academic endeavor which he led in a variety of fields. However, what

is of particular concern to us is his standing as an *uṣūlī*, that is, a scholar of the principles of jurisprudence. To al-Bāqillānī may be attributed the second turning point in the history of the discipline known as *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the first such turning point having been brought about by Imam al-Shāfi‘ī. For while al-Shāfi‘ī ushered *uṣūl al-fiqh* into the phase of written compilation, al-Bāqillānī took the discipline a step further into the phase of comprehensive expansion and of intermingling and interaction with the discipline of theology,¹⁸ a development which was attended by both benefit and harm.

The transformation witnessed by the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* thanks to al-Bāqillānī's influence is evidenced by the following:

(1) His voluminous work entitled *al-Taqrīb wa al-Irshād fī Tartīb Ṭuruq al-Ijtihād*, the sheer size of which is evidenced by the fact that al-Bāqillānī himself abridged it twice, first under the title *al-Irshād al-Mutawassit*, then under the title *al-Irshād al-Ṣaghīr*. Muhammad Hasan Hitu quotes¹⁹ Ibn al-Subkī as stating that *al-Taqrīb* is “the most momentous book ever written on the principles of jurisprudence. The version which has come down to us is *al-Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣaghīr*,²⁰ which consists of four volumes, as compared with the twelve volumes which are said to have made up the original, unabridged version.” This is a major expansion in the realm of written works on the principles of jurisprudence, and even in succeeding eras one rarely finds anything comparable. Other books written by al-Bāqillānī include *al-Muqni‘ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *al-Aḥkām wa al-‘Ilal* and *Kitāb al-Bayān ‘an Farā’id al-Dīn wa Sharā’i‘ al-Islām*, all of which bear a connection to the study of the objectives of the Law and may well have influenced what was written thereafter on this subject.

(2) Evidence of the major influence exerted by al-Bāqillānī both in his own and succeeding generations may be seen in the fact that his views on principles of jurisprudence continued to preoccupy the *uṣūliyyūn* and hold sway over their writings. Al-Juwaynī summarized al-Bāqillānī's *al-Taqrīb* in a book which he entitled *al-Talkhīṣ*. Moreover, wherever al-Juwaynī discusses any topic of moment in *al-*

Burhān, one can sense al-Bāqillānī's presence, that is, one can feel al-Bāqillānī's stated convictions hovering about al-Juwaynī's words, as it were – supporting, disagreeing, clarifying, or correcting as the case may be. Al-Bāqillānī's influence can likewise be perceived in other 5th Century writings, such as those of al-Shīrāzī, al-Ghazālī and others, as well as in the works which appeared in the centuries that followed.

(3) Quoting from al-Zarkashī's *al-Bahr al-Muhtī* (in manuscript form), Mustafa Abd al-Razzaq describes the development of writing on the topic of *uṣūl al-fiqh* after the time of al-Shāfi‘ī. He states, “Those who succeeded him undertook to explain and clarify, simplify and comment, until the appearance of the Sunnites’ Abū Bakr ibn al-Ṭayyib, and the Mu‘tazilites’, ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who proceeded to expand terminology and decipher symbols: detailing that which had been stated in general terms and resolving ambiguities such that others began to follow their example.”²¹ Moreover, if we know that al-Bāqillānī preceded ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415 AH/1024 AC) and that he instituted a far greater expansion of *uṣūl al-fiqh* than did ‘Abd al-Jabbār, we will realize that the transformation to which al-Zarkashī refers applies more fittingly, and more completely, to al-Bāqillānī than it does to any other. Abd al-Razzaq states that “from the 4th Century AH, scholastic theologians took over the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Consequently, their methods gained ascendancy over that of the jurisprudents and, due to the intimate contact between the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* on one hand, and logic and philosophy on the other, the effects of the latter two disciplines crept into the former.”²² Yet just as the expansion of *uṣūl al-fiqh* may be attributed more accurately and fully to al-Bāqillānī than to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, the influence spoken of by Abd al-Razzaq was more relevant to al-Bāqillānī than it was to ‘Abd al-Jabbār; for there can be no doubt that al-Bāqillānī lived during the 4th Century AH, whereas ‘Abd al-Jabbār also lived a good part of his life during the 5th Century AH.

This said, we now move to the most prominent links in the chain of *uṣūliyyūn* who dealt, to one extent or another, with the objectives of Islamic Law. In the pages which follow, I will aim to present these

scholars' most significant contributions to this discipline based on the information at my disposal.

The Imam of the Two Sacred Shrines (d. 478 AH/1085 AC)

Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Juwainī, also known as the Imam of the Two Sacred Shrines, represents a prominent way station along the path charted by the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This is a known fact among those familiar with the history of this science; hence, it requires no more proof than *al-Burhān* (The Proof) itself.²³ Indeed, *al-Burhān* became the starting point for all writing on *uṣūl al-fiqh* by those who succeeded al-Juwainī, just as al-Shāfi‘ī’s *Risālah* had been the starting point for writings in this field during the 3rd and 4th Centuries AH and continued in this capacity until the days of al-Juwainī, whose father (d. 438 AH/1046 AC) was among those who wrote commentaries on *al-Risālah*.

Suffice it as evidence of al-Juwainī’s stature in the sphere of *uṣūl al-fiqh* that it was he who exercised the greatest, most profound influence on his disciple, Imam Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. For although al-Ghazālī surpassed his shaykh in both fame and distinction, the first of al-Ghazālī’s works on the subject of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, namely, *al-Mankhūl*, nevertheless consists of nothing but faithful summaries of al-Juwainī’s views.²⁴ In relation to the topic of our study, namely, the objectives of Islamic Law, al-Juwainī performed a pioneering role which is unrivaled to this day; hence, even the leading role performed by al-Ghazālī in this sphere depended to a large degree on that of his shaykh, al-Juwainī.

The trail blazed by al-Juwainī in the realm of *maqāṣid* becomes manifest, first of all, in the frequency with which he draws attention to this theme. In his book, *al-Burhān*, he uses the terms *al-maqāṣid*, *al-maqṣūd*, and *al-qāṣd* scores of times, in addition to which he often refers to the same concepts by the use of the terms *gharād* and its plural *aghraḍ*, etc. An example of this phenomenon is al-Juwainī’s explanation of the obligatory rites relating to ritual purity and the purpose behind them, after which he moves on to the subject of waterless ablutions (*al-tayammum*), the purpose of which might be

difficult to identify. Speaking in the language of the jurisprudents he says,

Waterless ablutions were established as a substitute [for ablutions with water], the purpose of which does not reside in the act itself. Whoever reflects carefully and thoroughly on the matter will realize that the purpose behind waterless ablutions is to perpetuate the habit of performing the duties associated with ritual purity. After all, journeys are regularly occurring events in people's lives,²⁵ during which it is not unusual for water to be in short supply. Now, if someone were to perform canonical prayers having performed neither the rites required to achieve ritual purity nor any sort of substitute rite, he would grow accustomed to praying in such a state; after all, whatever you accustom yourself to will become your habit. This, in turn, might lead you to succumb easily to your own inclinations and to neglect the rites required of you by the Law and the purposes for which they were instituted.²⁶

In a refutation of al-Kā'bī al-Mu'tazilī, who was well known for his rejection of the legal category referred to as 'permissible', that is (*mubāḥ*),²⁷ al-Juwainī stresses the importance of making allowance for the objectives of the Law: "Whoever fails to comprehend the objectives which underlie the [divine] commands and prohibitions has likewise failed to perceive the basis for the establishment of the Law."²⁸

Nevertheless, the most important contribution which al-Juwainī made toward drawing attention to and provoking discussion of the objectives of the Law may be found in the section of his chapter on analogy entitled, "Categories of Bases and Principles."²⁹ In this section al-Juwainī first presents various scholars' views on which legal rulings in Islam may be understood in terms of their underlying bases, or *'ilal*, and which of them may not, after which he mentions examples of these scholars' interpretations of various rulings and the manner in which such interpretations influence the process of drawing analogies among rulings. Then he says, "What has been stated by these [scholars] constitutes the fundamentals of the Law, which we divide into five categories."³⁰ It is clear from this statement that the

five-fold division being spoken of by al-Juwainī is his own and that it had never been proposed before. It should be borne in mind that al-Juwainī introduced this division of the bases and objectives of Islamic Law in order to help distinguish between cases in which it is valid to draw an analogy between one ruling and another and those in which it is not valid to do so. As for the five categories of legal bases (*'ilal*) – or interpretations founded thereon – they are listed as follows:

Category 1: Those which have to do with ‘the essentials,’ such as the law of retribution for murder, which is interpreted on the basis of the fact that its purpose is to prevent the shedding of innocent blood and to deter against assaults on innocent lives.³¹

Category 2: Those which have to do with general needs yet do not fall within the category of essentials. These include, for example, covenants of protection concluded among individuals.³²

Category 3: Those which – like the rites required in order to achieve a state of ritual purity – have to do with that which is neither essential nor a general need, but rather, with acquiring noble traits and abandoning their opposites.³³

Category 4: Those which have to do with neither an ‘essential’ nor a general need, but which are still less urgent than Category 3 in that they are limited to actions which are deemed ‘recommended’ (*al-mandūbāt*).³⁴ These are, in essence, like Category 3 above in that their beneficial purpose is to encourage virtues or noble deeds which are not explicitly commanded in any text of the Law, but which are recommended.³⁵

Category 5: Those for which no clear interpretation or aim can be found, whether on the basis of essentials, needs, or virtuous traits and actions. Concerning this category al-Juwainī states, “This is very difficult to imagine.”³⁶ In other words, this type of ruling in Islamic Law is quite rare, since nearly all of its rulings have clear objectives and discernible benefits. Hence, even though the example which he cites of this type of ruling – i.e., the type which cannot be interpreted in terms of its bases or objectives – is certain physical forms of worship “which are not associated with any particular aim,

be it the achievement of benefit or the prevention of harm,”³⁷ he soon goes on to point out that these forms of worship may be interpreted in terms of what might be thought of as universal objectives. In other words, they may be seen as training us in subservience to God Almighty and in the renewal of our covenant with Him through sacred invocation – which serves, in turn, to prevent us from engaging in shameful and unjust deeds, reduces our tendency to go to excess in satisfying worldly desires, and reminds us of the importance of preparing ourselves for the life to come. Of these objectives al-Juwainī states, “These are universal objectives which we must recognize as underlying the Lawgiver’s commands to engage in physical expressions of worship.” As evidence in favor of this assertion, al-Juwainī cites texts from the Qur’an such as God’s declaration that “prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds” (29:45).³⁸

Once these five categories have been accounted for, all that remains are some of the Law’s detailed rulings which are difficult to interpret in terms of particular bases or objectives and which cannot be used as the basis for analogies with other rulings, such as the postures of prayer and the number of genuflections to be performed in each prayer, or the specification of the fasting month and when it begins.³⁹

Returning to the five-fold division of legal bases and objectives, we have seen that, based on the words of al-Juwainī himself, Categories 3 and 4 may be combined into one. This is confirmed by the fact that when he mentions Category 5, he stipulates that it is included in neither ‘essentials,’ ‘needs,’ nor ‘enhancements.’ Hence, he limits the other categories to three.

When we come to Category 5 we find that al-Juwainī has divided it implicitly into rulings which can be interpreted in terms of universal objectives, and those which cannot be interpreted at all. It follows, then, that any ruling which is subject to interpretation in terms of the objectives and bases of the Law must be subsumed under one of the first three categories; in other words, it must be included either among ‘essentials,’ ‘needs,’ or ‘enhancements.’ As for that which cannot be interpreted in terms of any basis or aim, it falls outside the

purview of this discussion, which has to do with the bases (*'ilal*) of Islamic legal rulings. What we are left with, then, is three categories.

Hence, it was al-Juwainī who first introduced the three-fold division of the Lawgiver's objectives into 'essentials,' 'needs,' and thirdly 'enhancements,' a division which has become the foundation of all discussion of *maqāṣid*. It was likewise al-Juwainī who first made reference to what are referred to as the major essentials in Islamic Law and which will be enumerated below as the five essentials: religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny, and wealth. In this connection he states,

Islamic Law is comprised of that which is commanded, that which is prohibited, and that which is permitted. That which is commanded includes, for the most part, acts of worship. As for those acts which are prohibited, the Law has laid down deterrents for the most serious of them. Generally speaking, human life is preserved through the law of retribution, chastity is preserved through the punishments laid down [for related transgressions], and people's possessions are protected from thieves by cutting off [their hands].⁴⁰

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH/1111 AC)

Imam al-Ghazālī, as I have mentioned, was in many ways an extension of his shaykh, al-Juwainī. He was thoroughly imbued with al-Juwainī's thought and views and was influenced significantly by his method and choices. Despite this, however, he did not stop at the limits at which his had stopped, whether in the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in general or in the study of the objectives of Islamic Law in particular. Rather, he revised and amended, added and developed, thereby becoming a contributor and pioneer in his own right, with a position of distinction both in the history of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and in the study of the objectives of Islamic Law. Al-Ghazālī's distinctive position with respect to his was fully recognized by the latter. In the context of arguing in favor of the Shafi'i school over other schools,⁴¹ al-Juwainī wrote,

Although the forerunner has the right to establish, create and lay

groundwork, the critic who succeeds him has the right to complete and perfect. Every subject, when first introduced, may exhibit some degree of ambiguity and confusion in its principles, after which there is a gradual move toward refinement and clarity. Consequently, it is not the founder, but the successor who becomes more worthy of a following, since it is he who unites the various schools around what his predecessor established. This phenomenon may be observed clearly, both in trades and crafts and in academic disciplines.⁴²

Although al-Ghazālī offered little that was new in his first work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, namely, *al-Mankhūl min Ta‘līqāt al-Uṣūl*, he progressed clearly in the realms of revision and development in his book entitled *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl fī Bayān al-Shabah wa al-Mukhīl wa Masālik al-Ta‘līl*, after which he made even more distinctive, mature contributions in *al-Mustasfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*. In *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl*, al-Ghazālī mentions the objectives of Islamic Law in the context of his discussion of what is known as *maslak al-munāṣabah*,* or ‘the appropriateness approach’ which constitutes one of a number of approaches to *ta‘līl*, or interpretation of legal rulings in terms of their underlying foundations or bases (*‘ilal*).

This approach is based on the understanding of legal rulings in terms of the benefit which they achieve or the harm which they prevent. Al-Ghazālī states, “Appropriate meanings [objectives] are what point to the various aspects of interests and their indications, [where]...‘interest’ is based on the achievement of a benefit or the prevention of harm. Similarly, it may be said that ‘appropriateness’ is based on consideration of an intended outcome.”⁴³ Hence, the interest-related occasions on the basis of which it is valid to undertake *ta‘līl* are those which involve consideration for one or more of the Lawgiver’s objectives: “That which does not reflect consideration for an outcome intended [by the Lawgiver] is not appropriate, while that which evidences consideration for such an intended outcome is appropriate.”⁴⁴

This condition which al-Ghazālī stipulates for the permissibility of engaging in interest-based, or appropriateness-based, interpretation of legal rulings, and which must entail consideration for one or more

of the Lawgiver's objectives, is stated even more explicitly in *al-Mustaṣfā* in the context of his treatment of the validity of *istiṣlāh*,* or the practice of basing legal rulings on consideration for *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*,* or unrestricted interests. Al-Ghazālī defines interests recognized explicitly in Islamic Law as follows: "By 'interest' we mean the preservation of the Lawgiver's objective..."⁴⁵ At the conclusion to his study, al-Ghazālī returns to the theme of unrestricted interests in what may be viewed as the definitive statement on the validity of *istiṣlāh*. Al-Ghazālī states,

Every interest which is not based on the preservation of an objective which may be understood from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the Muslim community,⁴⁶ but which is, rather, a foreign interest which is inconsistent with the comportment called for by Islamic Law, is invalid and unacceptable. As for an interest which is based on the preservation of a legitimate objective which is known to be the intent of the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim community, it is not outside the purview of these principles; however, it is not referred to as an analogy but rather as an unrestricted interest.⁴⁷

He then continues,

Moreover, if we interpret 'interest' to mean the preservation of the Law's intent, then there is no basis for disagreement over whether it is to be observed; on the contrary, it must be stated unequivocally to have an authoritative claim over us.⁴⁸

In both *Shifā'* *al-Ghalil* and *al-Mustaṣfā*, al-Ghazālī spells out for us the central objectives of Islamic Law around which all legitimate intents and interests revolve. In the first book he divides the objectives of the Law into the dual categories of 'spiritual' (or 'religious') and 'worldly'.⁴⁹ In addition, he asserts that "it is known for a certainty that preservation of human life, the faculty of reason, chastity and material possessions are the intent of the Law,"⁵⁰ after which he cites evidence for each of these objectives. Hence:

- The aim of preserving human life is evidenced by the law of retribution in the event of murder.
- The aim of preserving the faculty of reason is evidenced by the prohibition against partaking of alcoholic beverages.
- The aim of preserving chastity is evidenced by the prohibition against adultery and fornication and the punishment prescribed for them.
- The aim of preserving people's wealth is evidenced by the prohibition against taking others' possessions, the command to offer a guarantee (*Damān**), and amputation of the thief's hand.

Al-Ghazālī then adds, “The Lawgiver draws attention to the interests of religion in His declaration in the Qur'an that ‘prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds’ (29:45). Whatever curbs shameful deeds is, therefore, something which encompasses all interests relating to religion, and could be associated with worldly interests as well.”⁵¹

In *al-Mustasfā*, al-Ghazālī repeats these overall objectives of the Law, but in a more precise, refined form. In this book he does not divide the Law's objectives into the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘worldly,’ perhaps because he senses the possibility that there are some who might object that all of the objectives of the Law are at once worldly and spiritual. Indeed, al-Ghazālī himself alludes to this notion at the end of the statement quoted above. The prohibition against shameful and unjust deeds, for example, is itself a prohibition against killing, drunkenness, sexual misconduct and theft; as such, it aims to preserve interests which are both spiritual and worldly.

Therefore, rather than placing so-called spiritual interests over against so-called worldly interests, al-Ghazālī places ‘preservation of religion’ at the top of the list of the Law's essential objectives. What is meant here by the interest referred to as ‘religion’ – or the necessity of religion – is the source of religious devotion and practice represented by faith in God, worship of God, and affirmation of God's oneness. Evidence of this may be seen in his statement, “Examples of this [i.e., the preservation of religion] include the Law's ruling that the apostate⁵² is to be put to death and that the innovator who calls

others to embrace his innovation is to be punished, since such people and their actions cause others to forfeit their religion.”⁵³

In this manner, al-Ghazālī managed to avoid objections to the problematic division of the interests underlying the Law into ‘spiritual’ and ‘worldly.’ In addition, he came to eschew the use of the term ‘chastity’⁵⁴ which he had used in *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl* in favor of the clearer and more precise term, ‘progeny.’ Given this revision, the formulation of the basic objectives of the Law came to be as follows: “The Law’s intention for human beings is fivefold, namely, to preserve their religion, their lives, their faculty of reasoning, their progeny, and their material wealth.”⁵⁵

Among the views whose origin we find in *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl* and which al-Ghazālī rendered more precise in *al-Mustaṣfā* are those relating to the preservation of these same five essentials in previous laws. In his discussion of the preservation of human life in *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl*, for example, he states, “According to those who affirm the human mind’s ability to distinguish between good and evil – [a reference to the Mu‘tazilites] – it would be unthinkable for any [human] law to lack [measures by means of which to preserve human life].”⁵⁶ However, not long after making this statement, al-Ghazālī himself adopts the Mu‘tazilites’ belief in “the human mind’s ability to distinguish between good and evil.” Hence, in speaking of the preservation of the faculty of reasoning and the consequent prohibition against alcoholic beverages, he states,

This, similarly, is something which would be denied neither by discerning individuals nor by any law which affirms consideration for human welfare in the realms of spirit and body. For no religion has ever permitted the use of intoxicants, although some may have permitted an amount less than that which would produce actual intoxication. And the same may be said concerning the objectives of preserving chastity, material wealth and the like.⁵⁷

Then, in a sweeping, definitive statement concerning the five ‘essentials,’ al-Ghazālī declares in *al-Mustaṣfā* that “it is unthinkable that any religion, or any law which is intended to reform humanity,

should fail to include this [i.e., means by which to preserve these five entities]. Consequently, there is no disagreement among various laws as to the necessity of prohibiting disbelief, murder, sexual contact outside the bonds of marriage, theft, and the drinking of intoxicants.”⁵⁸

Al-Ghazālī following the manner of his shaykh, al-Juwainī, categorizes the interests preserved by Islamic Law according to their degree of urgency and clarity. On this basis, then, some interests are classified as ‘essentials,’ others as ‘needs’, and others as ‘enhancements.’ Each class, moreover, has certain complements.⁵⁹ This classification as presented by Imam al-Ghazālī is characterized by a high degree of clarity and stability. He highlights the contrasts and inter-relationships among the three classes, giving abundant examples of each class and its complements. However, the matter of classifying legal rulings within the three classes, and particularly within the two classes of ‘needs’ and ‘enhancements,’ is a task which involves a good measure of independent reasoning and approximation.

The steps which al-Ghazālī took and the principles which he refined and clarified with respect to the objectives of Islamic Law came to define the parameters for the *uṣūliyyūn* who succeeded him until the time of Imam al-Shāṭibī, who represents the third turning point in the history of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Perhaps one of the things which have immortalized al-Ghazālī’s writings on the objectives of Islamic Law and which caused *uṣūliyyūn* for several centuries thereafter to do no more than repeat what he had said is that his writings were a crowning, as it were, of the insights into this topic which had preceded him. Al-Ghazālī’s writings were, in addition, a crystallization of the steps he himself had taken, and it is for this reason that they were marked, particularly in his final book, *al-Muṭaṣfā*, by such a distinctive degree of refinement, focus and clarity.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH/1209 AC)

In his book entitled, *al-Maḥṣūl*, al-Rāzī includes all that was written before it by al-Juwainī and al-Ghazālī. This comes as no surprise, since his book is simply a summarization of the books *al-Mu’tamad*

by Abū al-Husayn al-Baṣrī, *al-Burhān* by al-Juwainī and *al-Muṣṭaṣfā* by al-Ghazālī. However, an impressive feat recorded in al-Rāzī’s biography is that he had memorized both *al-Mu‘tamad* and *al-Muṣṭaṣfā* in their entirety!⁶⁰ He devoted long years to the defense of *ta‘līl*, that is, the practice of tracing legal rulings back to their bases and causes, at a time when the notion of *ta‘līl* had begun to suffer decline and doubts were being cast on its usefulness and importance.

Al-Rāzī did not adhere to the order which al-Ghazālī had established for the five ‘essentials’; in fact, he did not adhere to any particular order. At times he would list them, for example, as: human life, material wealth, progeny (*al-nasab*), religion, and the faculty of reason.⁶¹ At other times, he would list them as: human life, the faculty of reason, religion, material wealth, and progeny.⁶² Note also that he refers to ‘progeny’ with the word *al-nasab* rather than the word *nasl* despite the fact that the latter is more accurate, for it is the preservation of one’s progeny which may be classified as one of the ‘essentials’ under the Law; as for the preservation of *nasab*, or family lineage, it is complementary to the preservation of progeny.

Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631 AH/1233 AC)

Al-Āmidī’s book, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* is still another summarization of the three aforementioned books: Abū al-Husayn al-Baṣrī’s *al-Mu‘tamad*, al-Juwainī’s *al-Burhān*, and al-Ghazālī’s *al-Muṣṭaṣfā*. However, what al-Āmidī offers which is new and of benefit in this work is that he introduces *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* into decisions involving the choice of one ruling over another and, specifically, into the process of deciding between conflicting analogies, a practice which was to become an approved custom among those *uṣūliyyūn* who succeeded him.

Al-Āmidī stipulates that legal objectives which are classified as ‘essentials’ must be given priority over those classified as ‘needs,’ which in turn are to be given priority over those classified as ‘enhancements.’ Similarly, primary interests are to be given priority over their complements, while the complements to ‘essentials’ are to be given priority over the complements to ‘needs,’ and so forth.⁶³ Then,

and perhaps for the first time, he proceeds to clarify the means by which the five ‘essentials’ are to be arranged and which of them are to be given priority over others based on this arrangement. In addition, al-Āmidī offers a defense of the arrangement he has chosen. When al-Āmidī first makes mention of the five ‘essentials,’ he lists them in the same order adopted by al-Ghazālī, saying, “...The five objectives which are recognized by virtually every religion and law are: religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth.”⁶⁴

When detailing his argument concerning which essentials are to be given priority over others, he chooses to give the preservation of progeny and human life priority over the preservation of the faculty of reason. The reason he offers for this is that the preservation of the faculty of reason is simply an outcome of the preservation of human life and progeny, and it is through the preservation of the former two that the faculty of human reason is itself preserved, whereas if human life and progeny were forfeited, so also would be the faculty of reason. As for the preservation of the faculty of reason, it does not necessarily entail the preservation of human life and progeny, whereas its existence cannot be conceived of without the latter two entities.⁶⁵ Al-Āmidī writes at length in defense of giving priority to the preservation of religion over the preservation of human life. He states,

Whatever is intended to preserve the root of religion should be given priority over all else, since [the Islamic] religion’s aim and ultimate outcome is the attainment of eternal happiness in the presence of the Lord of the worlds. All other objectives, including the preservation of human life, the faculty of reason, material wealth and anything else, are in the service of this overriding interest. As God Almighty declares, “I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me” (Qur’ān, 51:56).⁶⁶

Al-Āmidī then offers a detailed refutation of arguments offered in favor of giving priority to the preservation of human life over the preservation of religion.

Among the new points offered by al-Āmidī is the explicit declaration that the ‘essentials’ are limited to these five. He states, “The limitation of the essentials to these five categories is based on the observation of reality and the awareness that there is, for the most part, no essential aim beyond them.”⁶⁷ Following al-Āmidī, the *uṣūliyyūn* began to state explicitly that the ‘essentials’ were to be limited to these five and that an inductive reading of the Law would support this conclusion, whereas Imam al-Ghazālī, who had first named these essentials, limited their number only implicitly.

Be that as it may, the limitation of the essentials to the aforementioned five, despite the virtual consensus which supports it, is in need of reconsideration and review. And although this is not the place to discuss this point, occasions for such discussion will present themselves later in this study.

In the generations which followed al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī, the hands of the clock came to a standstill, as it were, and the traditionalist writings⁶⁸ on *uṣūl al-fiqh* came to be little more than abridgments of what had been written previously, commentaries on the abridgments, summaries of the commentaries, then commentaries on the summaries.

One writer might take it upon himself to compose some of the above in the form of poetry, after which another, or possibly the same writer, might volunteer to transform the poetry into prose, and so on until the time of *Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘* (Compendium of Compendiums)⁶⁹ or, more properly speaking, the *jam‘ al-mawāni‘* (that is, the “compendium of hindrances”), by which I mean the impediments which came to be placed in the way of renewal, change, revision, academic progress, or even direct interaction with the writings of early scholars. Hence, after the appearance of *Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘*, nothing remained but to preserve it and write marginal glosses on it!

Ibn al-Hājib (d. 646 AH/1248 AC)

Remaining within al-Āmidī’s orbit, Ibn al-Hājib states,

The objectives of the Law are of two types: those which are essential in

and of themselves and which merit the highest priority, such as the five objectives which are reflected in every religion – the preservation of religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth – and those which are non-essential, i.e., those for which there is no intrinsic need, such as selling and entering into covenants of protection.⁷⁰

In discussing the process of assigning priority to some objectives or rulings over others, Ibn al-Hājib stipulates that the ‘essentials’ should be given priority over ‘needs,’ thereby remaining in line with the views expressed previously by al-Āmidī. He then goes on to discuss the assignment of priority among the ‘essentials’ themselves, stipulating that the need to preserve (the Islamic) religion should be given priority over all the remaining essentials. He then adds, “Some might propose the very opposite arrangement, that is, giving priority to human beings’ right – due to the harm they suffer – over God’s right due to the fact that God in His Sublimity is incapable of suffering harm.”⁷¹ However, Ibn al-Hājib then refutes this alternative view using the very same arguments put forward by al-Āmidī; he also follows al-Āmidī in giving priority to the preservation of progeny over the preservation of the faculty of reason.

Al-Baydāwī (d. 685 AH/1286 AC)

Like al-Rāzī, al-Baydāwī divides the objectives into ‘other-worldly’ and ‘this-worldly.’ Other-worldly objectives include things such as purification of the soul, while this-worldly objectives are of three types: (1) essential, “such as the preservation of human life through the law of retribution, preservation of [the Islamic] religion through armed conflict, preservation of the faculty of reason through the prohibition against intoxicants, the preservation of material wealth through various kinds of legal guarantees, and the preservation of progeny by carrying out the penalties associated with sexual misconduct,”⁷² (2) interest-related, such as the assignment of a legal guardian over a minor; and (3) enhancement-related, such as the prohibition of rubbish, filth and the like in public places.

Al-Isnawī (d. 772 AH/1370 AC)

Al-Isnawī makes no comment on this arrangement of the essentials; instead, he simply adheres to it in his commentary on the passage above.⁷³ However, in another passage he mentions them in the following order: "... religion, human life, the faculty of reason, material wealth and progeny..."⁷⁴ And in connection with the question of assigning priority to some objectives over others, he restricts himself without comment to the approach taken by al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib.⁷⁵

Hence, the *uṣūliyyūn* either vacillated between al-Ghazālī's and al-Āmidī's arrangements of the five essentials or simply followed no particular order at all. Al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī agreed on giving priority to religion over human life and on giving lower priority to material wealth, while they disagreed over whether to give progeny priority over the faculty of reason, or vice-versa. However, given that al-Ghazālī offered no explanation or defense of his arrangement, the most reasonable of the two views is that put forward by al-Āmidī.

This said, allow me to deal with certain statements which I feel are in need of correction. Specifically, I am referring to statements made by Wahbah al-Zuhayli and Muhammad Said al-Buti. Al-Zuhayli states, "The Malikites and the Shafi'ites arrange these five fundamentals or essentials as follows: religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth, whereas the Hanafites place them in the following order: religion, human life, progeny (or family lineage, *nasab*), the faculty of reason, and material wealth."⁷⁶

The fact is, however, that there is no justification for associating a given arrangement for these essentials with this or that school of jurisprudence. Hence, the attribution of this or that arrangement, whatever it happens to be, to the Hanafites is a baseless invention; after all, the Hanafites have nothing to do with this issue, nor, for that matter, do the Malikites, even if Ibn al-Ḥājib, himself a Maliki, adopted al-Āmidī's arrangement, which was adopted by numerous other scholars as well.

Al-Zuhayli bases his statement above on a Hanafite reference work, namely, *Musallam al-Thubūt*. However, this reference is not

authoritative in the least, and this for two reasons: Firstly, because its author, Muhibb Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Shakūr, was a very late thinker (d. 1119 AH/1707 AC), and secondly, because he did not establish this order on his own, nor did he propose it as something which represents the Ḥanafite school. Rather, he was simply following the *uṣūliyyūn* of the Shafi‘ite tradition. It is a known fact that *Musallam al-Thubūt* is a work which combines the Shafi‘ite and Ḥanafite approaches and points of view. Moreover, when the author mentions the five essentials for the first time, he mentions them in the order supported by al-Ghazālī, who was a Shafi‘ite; that is, he gives the faculty of reason priority over progeny/family lineage.⁷⁷ However, when he mentions them in the context of decisions concerning which essentials to give priority over others, he chooses – following al-Āmidī, also a Shafi‘ite – to place progeny over the faculty of reason.⁷⁸

Hence, both arrangements were laid down by *uṣūliyyūn* of the Shafi‘ite school, after which they were followed by the Malikites and the Ḥanafites. The question of how to prioritize the five ‘essentials’ thus has nothing essentially to do with which school of jurisprudence one belongs to; rather, it is solely a matter of individual judgment and interpretation.

As for al-Buti, he adopts al-Ghazālī’s arrangement and justifies this choice from his point of view. He also provides a number of illustrative examples from the realm of jurisprudence, all of which is his prerogative. However, al-Buti goes one step too far when he states that “the arrangement of the essentials in this order is the subject of unanimous agreement.”⁷⁹ Given the foregoing discussion of the subject at hand, I see no need to explain why this statement is an exaggeration; hence, I will content myself with what has already been said.

Ibn al-Subkī (d. 771 AH/1369 AC)

Ibn al-Subkī mentions the five essentials in the same order in which al-Ghazālī lists them; however, like al-Rāzī and others, he replaces al-Ghazālī’s term *al-nasl* with the term *al-nasab*. In addition, he adds a sixth, saying, “That which may be deemed essential includes the

preservation of religion, human life, the faculty of reason, family lineage, material wealth, and honor.”⁸⁰ In a marginal gloss on this statement al-Banānī writes,

[honor] is added by al-Tūfī (d. 716 AH/1316 AC) in his *al-Muṣannaf*. In so doing, however, he links it with the preceding by means of the Arabic particle *wāw*, which indicates that it is to be subsumed under the category of material wealth. All of the preceding items in the list, by contrast, are linked with the particle *fā'*, which makes clear that the category of ‘honor’ occupies a status subordinate to the others.⁸¹

Prior to al-Tūfī, the addition of honor to the five essentials is mentioned by al-Qarāfī (d. 684 AH/1285 AC). Speaking of others who preceded him, al-Qarāfī speaks of “...the five universals, namely, the preservation of human life, religion, progeny, the faculty of reason and material wealth, to which some have added, ‘honor’.”⁸² From this one may easily conclude that al-Qarāfī, by contrast with al-Subkī, had not adopted this addition himself.

Al-Shawkānī defends this addition to the five essentials, saying,

Some later scholars added a sixth, namely, the preservation of people’s honor. Most sensible people would be willing to give up their lives and their wealth before they would be willing to give up their honor. For whatever has been ransomed by that which is most essential is, necessarily, of the greatest importance. The Law has established a penalty for assaulting someone’s honor through slander and, indeed, one’s honor is more worthy of preservation than anything else. A person might be willing to pardon someone who had assaulted his physical person or his material possessions, but you would hardly find anyone who would be willing to pardon someone who had assaulted his honor. Thus someone has said:

*It is a small thing for our bodies to be afflicted
So long as our honor and our minds are spared.*⁸³

However, the fact is that by making honor into a sixth essential to be placed alongside that of religion, human life, progeny, the faculty

of reason, and material wealth, we diminish the value of these essentials for human life. In so doing, we reduce them to a level below that to which al-Ghazālī had lifted them through his focused, refined clarification of these major fundamentals. For while al-Ghazālī considered the preservation of human life to be an essential, some later scholars descended to the use of the term *al-nasab*, or ‘lineage’ (in place of the term *al-nasl*, or ‘progeny’), after which they descended even further to the addition of honor as one of the essentials! But are not the preservation of family lineage and the protection of people’s honor simply servants, as it were, to the preservation of progeny?

A further problem associated with this addition is that the preservation of people’s honor is not subject to precise measurement or definition: Where does it begin, and where does it end? And where is the dividing line between the preservation of honor and the preservation of *al-nasab*, or lineage? If it were permissible for us to add the essential of preserving lineage and honor, it would likewise be permissible for us to add – and with even greater reason – the essentials of faith, worship, a livelihood, food, as well as all manner of other genuine necessities which fall under the rubric of the five essentials and that which serves them.

Ibn Ashur takes issue with those who made the preservation of honor one of the essentials, considering it instead to fall in the category of ‘needs.’ Nor does he agree with making the preservation of lineage one of the essentials except insofar as it contributes to the preservation of progeny.⁸⁴ As I have indicated before, whatever fulfills such a role is merely a complement to that which is essential.

Let me turn now to some of those scholars who have broken free from this chain of imitation and repetition. What may have helped such thinkers to liberate and distinguish themselves is that they were not *uṣūliyyūn*, that is, specialists in the principles of Islamic Law, in the narrow sense of this appellation. Rather, they were both *uṣūliyyūn* and *fuqahā'* in the broader sense. I am not referring to the *uṣūliyyūn* of the Hanafite school – also known as *al-uṣūliyyūn al-fuqahā'* – whose method of writing on the subject of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is referred to as ‘the jurisprudents’ method’ (*tariqat al-fuqahā'*) or ‘the Hanafites’ method,’ as opposed to that of the scholastic theologians,

most of whom were Shafi'ites. In fact, the *uṣūliyyūn* of the Ḥanafite school were less mindful of the objectives of Islamic Law than were the scholastic theologians. I have reviewed a number of their writings, including both earlier and later scholars, but have found nothing of note on this score⁸⁵ despite the fact that among jurisprudents, it is the Ḥanafites who have most frequently interpreted Islamic legal rulings – both those having to do with daily transactions and those dealing with forms of worship – in terms of their bases and objectives. In this regard, they concern themselves with the bases and objectives of the Law far more than Shafi'ite jurisprudents; however, this applies to the realm of jurisprudence and its particulars.

As for the *uṣūliyyūn fuqahā'* whom I do wish to speak of here, they are, specifically: 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām and his student, al-Qarāfī, and Ibn Taymiyah and his student, Ibn al-Qayyim. These – alongside al-Shāṭibī – are some of the early scholars and thinkers who have stormed our modern age and whose ideas and books have gained wide recognition. Consequently – and thanks to the truthfulness, integrity, clarity and autonomy of their thinking and attitudes – they have come to have a powerful presence in modern writings, whether in the realm of jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence, the objectives of Islamic Law, or Islamic thought in general. Indeed, God grants His bounty to whomsoever He wills.

'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660 AH/1261 AC)

Imam 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām gained renown primarily through his remarkable book, *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām fī Maṣāliḥ al-Anām*. This book may be seen as being devoted almost entirely to the objectives of Islamic Law, whether one considers its forthright statements on the objectives underlying Islamic legal rulings, or the fact that discussions of benefits and sources of harm are, in effect, discussions of the objectives of Islamic Law, which can be summed up as the achievement of benefit and the prevention of harm.

Aḥmad Bābā al-Sūdānī al-Tunbuktī, author of *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, mentions another, unknown, book on this subject by Ibn 'Abd al-Salām entitled *Kitāb al-Maṣāliḥ wa al-Mafāsid*, adding that Imam

Ibn Marzūq the grandson (d. 842 AH/1438 AC) taught it to some of his students. One might have concluded that this book is, in fact, the same as *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām fī Maṣāliḥ al-Anām* except for the fact that al-Tunbuktī mentions both books side by side.⁸⁶ In addition, there is a book by Ḥurrat al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām which al-Subkī refers to as *Shajarat al-Ma'ārif* and which he describes as "very good,"⁸⁷ yet without saying anything about its content. However, some light is shed on the book's contents by Ibn Ashur. In his commentary on the Qur'anic verse which reads, "Behold, God enjoins justice and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men, and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all this] in mind" (16:90), he quotes from *al-Sīrah al-Halabiyyah* the statement that "Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām wrote a book which he entitled *al-Shajarah* in which he explained that all legal rulings in all areas of jurisprudence are contained within this verse."⁸⁸

What this means is that this book of Ibn 'Abd al-Salām's on jurisprudence and Islamic Law, indeed, on the foundations of jurisprudence and the philosophy of legislation, as well as the verse upon which he based the book, encompass all the objectives of Islamic Law. After all, this verse contains a command to pursue all that is beneficial and a prohibition against all manner of harmful practices, which is why Ibn Mas'ūd describes it as "the most inclusive verse in the entire Qur'an."⁸⁹ It may be assumed, then, that Ibn 'Abd al-Salām strove in this book to connect Islamic legal rulings with their origins and objectives as expressed in this verse. In doing so, he performed a noble, unique service.

One might ask, therefore, whether these two books are still extant. It is a question to which I have no answer; hence, I leave it to specialists and enterprising researchers. Meanwhile, let us turn our attention once again to the book which we do have available to us, namely, *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, where we find the following passages dealing with the objectives of Islamic Law. From the book's opening pages we find the author stating, for example, that "most of the objectives of the Qur'an are expressed either through commands to

pursue that which is beneficial and the causes which contribute to it, or through prohibitions against the pursuit of what is harmful and the causes which contribute to it.”⁹⁰

Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām held that Islamic Law in its entirety may be interpreted in terms of the benefits which it brings and the harm which it prevents, including both those rulings which are explained explicitly in a given text, and those which are not. The rulings for which there are explicit explanations contain guidance concerning the meanings and objectives of those for which there is no such explicit clarification. The author explains this point, saying,

The entire Law consists of interests: either it prevents that which would cause harm, or achieves that which would bring benefit. Hence, when you hear God say, “O ye who have believed!”, reflect carefully on whatever admonition follows His summons, and you will be certain to find some good which He is urging you to do or some evil against which He is cautioning you. In His book God sets forth the sources of harm which certain rulings urge you to avoid and the benefits which other rulings urge you to pursue.⁹¹

Elsewhere Ibn ‘Abd al-Salam confirms this universal principle governing the interpretation of Islamic legal rulings, all of which are for the purpose of achieving people’s well-being. He states, “All divine commands and prohibitions are founded upon the [pursuit of] benefit for human beings both in this world and in the next. God Himself has no need of anyone’s worship. He is not benefited by the obedience of the obedient, nor is He harmed by the disobedience of the disobedient.”⁹² In addition, he defines what is meant by ‘benefit’ and ‘harm’ both in the afterlife and in our present, earthly existence. He writes,

The benefits of the afterlife include the attainment of reward and deliverance from chastisement, while the sources of harm include chastisement and the loss of reward. The benefits to be found in this world include everything termed ‘essentials’ or ‘needs’ under Islamic Law, or by their complements and auxiliaries. And as for this world’s

sources of harm, they include the occurrence of whatever is contrary to the aforementioned.⁹³

Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām defines the objective behind the various forms of worship as follows: “The objective of all the various forms of worship is to glorify God, to extol His Greatness, and to demonstrate reverence for Him, dependence upon Him, and complete trust in Him.”⁹⁴ As for the interpretations and specific objectives of legal rulings, the book is replete with them. Note, in particular, the chapter entitled, “A Principle Applying to Differences Among Rulings on Human Conduct Due to the Differences Among the Interests Concerned,”⁹⁵ where one finds a listing of scores of specific objectives, as well as the manner in which rulings interact with such objectives and the interests which the rulings are designed to preserve. Given that this book has now become widely available, I will limit myself to this degree of detail here, with further mention of some of its contents later in this study.

The mention of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām leads naturally to the mention of his student, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī. Heir to his teacher’s learning and thought, al-Qarāfī may be counted as one of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s most praiseworthy achievements. However, whoever gives careful thought to what al-Qarāfī wrote concerning the objectives of Islamic Law and the interests which it serves will find that although he surpassed his shaykh in terms of fine-tuning, clarifying and organizing the principles and theories which his shaykh had formulated, he nevertheless hardly departed from the essentials of what his shaykh had taught. Hence, I will allow this brief mention of al-Qarāfī to suffice here.

Ibn Taymiyah (d. 728 AH/1327 AC)

Nearly everything ever written by Imam Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyah has something to tell us about the Law and its rulings, including explanations of their wise purposes and objectives, the interests which they serve, and the sources of harm which they seek to avert. What I shall mention of his writings on the objectives of

Islamic Law will represent only a tiny fraction of what he produced, for this man's own rulings on legal questions and his writings on matters of Islamic jurisprudence were prodigious, indeed.

One notes in the writings of Ibn Taymiyah that he lays consistent stress on the fact "that Islamic Law came to realize and enhance human well-being, and to minimize and neutralize sources of harm and corruption. It gives priority to the greater of two goods and to the worse of two evils, realizing the greater of two benefits by forgoing the lesser of the two, and averting the greater of two evils by tolerating the lesser of them."⁹⁶ He then proceeds to detail numerous examples of legal rulings as applied to these overarching principles. God has commanded human beings to do their utmost to adhere to whatever is most beneficial and to shun whatever is most likely to lead to corruption or harm. This is the primary foundation for Islamic legislation. As Ibn Taymiyah states,

The focal point of Islamic Law may be found in the words of God Almighty, "Remain, then, conscious of God as best you can" (Qur'an, 64:16), which serves as the basis for interpreting God's words, "Be conscious of God with all the consciousness that is due to Him" (Qur'an, 3:102). Similarly, the Law rests upon the words of the Prophet, "If I give you a command, obey it to the best of your ability,"⁹⁷ and upon the principle that it is obligatory to realize and perfect human interests and to minimize and neutralize that which causes harm and corruption. If, then, there is a conflict between two interests, the realization of the greater interest should be given priority over realization of the lesser one; similarly, priority should be given to averting the greater of two evils while tolerating the lesser one.⁹⁸

Let us take a concrete example of what Ibn Taymiyah has to say about the objectives of Islamic Law, namely, his statement on the objectives underlying the various types of legal guardianship, including the caliphate, judgeships, and *hisbah*.⁹⁹ He states,

The most important thing is for you to know that all forms of legal guardianship in Islam were established with the aim of ensuring that

worship be devoted to God alone and that the word of God alone be supreme. For God, Glorious and Exalted is He, created human beings to fulfill this purpose. It was likewise with this purpose that He revealed the sacred scriptures and sent His messengers, and it was for this cause that the Apostle and Muslim believers strove...¹⁰⁰

Elsewhere he states, “The aim which all forms of legal guardianship are meant to serve is that of correcting and preserving human beings’ religion since, if this is denied them, they will suffer the most manifest loss, whereupon none of the blessings they have enjoyed in this world will be of any benefit to them; similarly, their aim is to preserve whatever worldly conditions are essential for [sound] religion to exist and thrive.”¹⁰¹

The objectives of the various forms of legal guardianship are simply an extension and offshoot of the function of prophethood. Hence, the objectives of legal guardianship in its various manifestations are the same as the objectives of prophethood in its various manifestations. We thus find Ibn Taymiyah drawing a connection between them in his statement that,

The aim is for all religion [i.e., worship] to be devoted to God alone, and for the word of God alone to be supreme. The phrase ‘word of God’ is an inclusive phrase which refers to all of the words contained in His book. Thus God declares, “Indeed, [even aforetime] did We sent forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that men might behave with equity; and We bestowed [upon you] from on high [the ability to make use of] iron, in which there is awesome power...” (Qur'an, 57:25). Hence, the purpose for which God sent the apostles and revealed the sacred scriptures was for people to behave with equity, granting what is due to both God and other human beings.¹⁰²

Based on what is known about the objectives underlying the various types of legal guardianship and the specific features and duties which distinguish each type, decisions must be made concerning who

would be most qualified to assume each of them. “In such a situation, [the person responsible for making the appointments] should seek out those who fulfill most completely the necessary conditions, and if two candidates are before him, he must examine them to see which of the them comes closest to meeting the qualifications of the post.”¹⁰³ When human rulers’ objectives are in keeping with the objectives of the Law, they will conduct themselves in light of the guidance which the Law provides, and choose for the various (governmental) posts and types of legal guardianship those people who would be most able to achieve these positions’ legitimate objectives. If, on the other hand, human rulers’ objectives are at variance with the objectives of the Law, they will choose people who suit their own purposes. Concerning this Ibn Taymiyah states,

The most important thing in this connection is to know who is the most fit [to serve as a guardian], and this is only possible by determining the purpose behind the type of guardianship concerned and the means by which this purpose may be fulfilled. Once both the purpose and the means by which it can be fulfilled have been determined, the appointment will be made accordingly. Consequently, given that most rulers are under the sway of worldly objectives rather than the objectives of the [Islamic] religion, they give priority in filling positions of legal guardianship to those who will assist them in achieving these worldly objectives. After all, whoever seeks primacy for himself will grant preference to those who will establish his authority.¹⁰⁴

Ibn Taymiyah takes issue with the *uṣūliyyūn* for limiting the essentials of Islamic Law to the five which are now well known, holding that these five objectives do not encompass the Law’s most sublime or significant purposes. In this connection he says,

There are those who, when they speak of ‘appropriateness,’ delve deep into the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the interpretation of Islamic legal rulings based on occasions appropriate thereto. Such thinkers state that the Lawgiver’s arrangement of the legal rulings in accordance with their appropriate occasions guarantees the realization of benefit and

the avoidance of harm for human beings, and that benefits are of two types: other-worldly and this-worldly. Among other-worldly interests they list those wise purposes having to do with self-discipline and the refinement of morals, while among this-worldly interests they list that which guarantees the prevention of bloodshed and protects people's material wealth, chastity, mental faculties and outward religion. However, they make no mention of forms of worship which are both outward and inward, such as those which lead to the development of experiential knowledge of God, His angels, His books and His apostles, as well as spiritual states and actions of the heart such as love and reverence for God, worshipping with complete devotion and sincerity, utter dependence upon Him and hope for His mercy and blessing, not to mention benefits of other types in both this world and the next. Similarly with respect to the Laws God has laid down concerning faithfulness to covenants, maintenance of family ties, respect for the rights of servants and neighbors, Muslims' rights in relation to one another, and other aspects of life in regard to which God has issued commands and prohibitions in order to maintain exemplary conditions and refined morals, it may be seen that these, too, are some of the benefits which have been brought by Islamic Law.¹⁰⁵

This passage raises numerous questions and issues; as such, it calls for extended discussion and commentary. However, in this introductory chapter I am seeking to present more than to comment or discuss. I made mention earlier of the possibility of rethinking the limitation of the essentials of Islamic Law to the existing five, a limitation which was supported by the prevailing views of *uṣūliyyūn* in the past, and my quotation of the passage above from Ibn Taymiyah is a further indication of this possibility.¹⁰⁶ However, this issue requires a special discussion of its own. In conclusion, what I said earlier about al-Qarāfī in relation to his shaykh, Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām applies likewise to Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/1350 AC) in relation to his shaykh, Ibn Taymiyah. Even so, there will be occasions in the pages below to draw attention to statements by these men as well and to become acquainted with their contributions to the topic of our study.

[II]

The Notion of Higher Objectives in the Malikite School

I have devoted this section to the Malikite school in particular for two reasons: Firstly, such a focus will help us to gain a better grasp of the foundations and origins of al-Shāṭibī's theory. For as many will be aware, al-Shāṭibī was a Malikite. He grew up in an environment in which the Malikite school held complete sway; indeed, this region became, over time, one of the most insular of all Islamic environments, and the least open to interaction with other Islamic schools of jurisprudence. Secondly, the Malikite school is set apart from other schools of Islamic jurisprudence by its particular interest in and consideration for the objectives of Islamic Law. Prior to immersing myself in this study, I was unaware of this peculiarity; little by little, however, it revealed itself to me with increasing clarity, and I observed its manifest influence on al-Shāṭibī's own work.

Before presenting the most significant characteristics which caused the Malikite school to become 'the school of objectives' par excellence, I would like to clarify a matter which may help to dispel some of the confusion which arises in connection with the topic at hand. This matter is itself one of the first features which lent the Malikite school its place of distinction in connection with the objectives of Islamic Law.

What do I mean by the Malikite School?

Generally speaking, when a school of thought is attributed to a particular person – such as the attribution of the Hanafite school to Imam Abū Ḥanīfah, the Shāfi‘īte school to Imam al-Shāfi‘ī, the Maturidite school to Imam al-Māturīdī, or the Ash‘arite school to Imam al-Ash‘arī – this attribution serves as evidence of the foundational role which this person performed. Similarly, it is an indication that the school's founder is the one who originated the theories and premises upon which the school in question rests. However, this does not apply to the attribution of the Malikite school to Imam Mālik ibn Anas. The reason for this is that Mālik did not bring this school

into being, nor did he lay its foundations or formulate its principles. Rather, he came upon it ready-made, as it were. In other words, having inherited it as a complete, mature system, he adhered to it and proceeded to issue independent interpretations and judgments within the framework which it provided. Hence, when we say ‘the Malikite school,’ this is only valid if, when so speaking, we mean the school with which Mālik was associated, not the school which is attributed to Mālik as its founder.

Mālik, as is well known, inherited the knowledge of the scholars of Madinah; it was on the basis of this learning and knowledge that he issued fatwas* and it was upon this knowledge that he built. The most eloquent attestation to this may be found in *al-Muwatṭa'*, which is replete with expressions such as: ‘that which is agreed upon among us,’ ‘the view held among us,’ ‘in our city,’ ‘I came upon those with knowledge,’ ‘the Sunnah as understood and practiced among us,’ ‘I heard those with knowledge say,’ ‘the view which I found people to hold,’ ‘what I most treasure of what I heard’ or ‘the best thing I heard,’ ... and so forth. All such phrases bear explicit testimony to the fact that Mālik was carrying on a ‘school’ which was already established in both theory and practice. This is an acknowledged fact among those well-versed in the history of Islamic jurisprudence. Another fact which is similarly well established is that this ‘school’ is simply that which was inherited by the ‘followers of the followers’ – among whom Mālik counted himself – from the followers, and which the followers had inherited from the Companions of the Prophet in collective succession and in the form of both narratives and practical applications.

Let us reflect on the following exchange quoted by Ibn Farḥūn on p.25 of *al-Dībāj*:

Ibn Abī Uways states that someone once asked Mālik, “When you say in your book, ‘that which is agreed upon among us,’ ‘the view held among us,’ ‘in our city,’ ‘I came upon those with knowledge,’ ‘I heard some of those with knowledge saying,’ etc., [what do you mean]?” Mālik replied, “The book consists primarily of opinions. But I tell you truly, they are not my opinions. Rather, they are the views which I

heard from many knowledgeable men and the exemplary imams from whom I received learning. It is they who were most conscious of God Almighty. Then, having accumulated such a vast amount on their authority, I recorded my own opinion as well, and it is, indeed, my opinion. As for their views, they are the views which they found the Companions adhering to before them; and I likewise found them to be adhering to these points of view. This, then, is learning which has been passed down to us over the generations. Whatever opinion is presented [here], it was likewise the view held by an entire community of imams, or religious leaders, who came before us. When I write, ‘that which is agreed upon among us,’ I am speaking of statements made by those well established in fiqh and knowledge, and about which there has been no disagreement among them. Similarly when I write, ‘the view held among us,’ I am speaking of the views which have been adhered to by people among us, which have been conveyed in the form of legal rulings, and of which all have been aware, the ignorant and the knowledgeable alike. Similarly when I use the phrase, ‘in our city’ or ‘some of those with knowledge,’ I am referring to statements of which I approve by those with knowledge. As for those things which I did not hear from them, they are my own interpretations and judgements based on my investigation into the teachings of those whom I encountered; I have sought thereby to arrive at what appears to be the truth or near to it, lest my view depart from the teachings and views of the inhabitants of Madinah. Hence, if there is some particular view which I did not hear them express, I attribute it to myself after having engaged in my own interpretation and arrived at my own judgment. Such interpretations and judgments on my part, however, are based on the Sunnah, the prevailing practices of those with knowledge who have served as examples for others to follow, and the views in accordance with which we have been conducting ourselves since the days of the Messenger of God and the rightly guided imams. Hence, I have not departed from their views or adopted something which conflicts with them.”

We read in *Tartib al-Madārik* that “Hamīd ibn al-Aswad said, ‘After ‘Umar, the religious authority among us was Zayd ibn Thābit,

and after him, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar.’ ‘Ali ibn al-Madīnī tells us that, ‘Among those who followed Zayd’s views there were twenty-one men who received his teachings. These men’s knowledge was then passed on to three: Ibn Shihāb, Bukayr ibn ‘Abd Allāh, and Abū al-Zinād. The knowledge of all these men together was then passed on to Mālik ibn Anas.’”¹⁰⁷

Muhibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb¹⁰⁸ quotes the great Indian scholar Walī Allāh al-Dahlawī as stating that in his view, the primary source of fiqh during the age of the Companions was a specified group of Companions, whose leader and motive force was ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb. The fiqh propounded by ‘Umar and the Companions then passed onto a group known as “the seven jurisprudents of Madinah” namely, Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Utbah, Khārijah ibn Ziyād, Sulaymān ibn Yasār, and Sālim ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb. These men’s knowledge was inherited by their disciples, including men such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri, Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī, Zayd ibn Aslam, the servant of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb, Nāfi‘, servant to ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb, Rabī‘ah al-Ra‘y, and Abū al-Zinād. The knowledge of all these men was then passed on to Mālik ibn Anas al-Asbahī.

There is no contradiction between this statement and the previous one; rather, each of them highlights a different aspect of the collective links by means of which the fiqh which prevailed in Madinah was passed on in succession. Moreover, these two statements are in agreement on a particular point of significance, namely, that this chain began with ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb and ended with Mālik ibn Anas.

This is confirmed by Ibn Taymiyah, who adds that:

When deciding the proper course of action, the people of Madinah would either follow the Sunnah of the Messenger or refer to the cases on which decisions had been made by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb. It is [also] said that Mālik ibn Anas took most of what is found in *al-Muwatṭa’* from Rabī‘ah, who took his knowledge from Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, who took his knowledge from ‘Umar, who was a transmitter of

prophetic traditions. Al-Tirmidhī quotes a tradition on the authority of the Messenger of God in which he said, “If I had not been sent among you, ‘Umar would have been sent.” In Muslim and al-Bukhārī we read that he said, “Nations before you had transmitters of traditions, and if there is any such transmitter in my nation, it is ‘Umar.” The other collections of authentic prophetic traditions include the following words of the Prophet as well: “Emulate the two who will come after me, namely, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.”

‘Umar used to consult the senior Companions such as ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Talḥah, al-Zubayr, Sa‘d, and ‘Abd al-Rahmān, who made up the consultative council. Hence al-Sha‘bī states, “Consider the rulings issued by ‘Umar, since he used to consult others...”¹⁰⁹

Given the foregoing, it may be seen that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was a great statesman in the realms of policy and economy, war and peace, legislation and the judiciary, education and upbringing. He was a great statesman from the time the Islamic state was established by the Messenger of God to the moment when he was martyred in the year 32 AH. It is this which gives him unrivaled claim to the most authoritative position in the realm of fiqh, whether it pertains to matters of the spirit or those of material existence. And how much more worthy must he be of this standing in his capacity as an inspired transmitter of prophetic traditions who clung to the Sunnah and sought refuge from error through consultation? Based on what we have seen, then, it is ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who constitutes the initial link in the school of fiqh which prevailed in Madinah.

Whoever makes even the briefest examination of *al-Muwatṭa'* will realize that it is ‘Umar’s fiqh, legal rulings, fatwas and established customs which, after the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, form the underpinning for the entire book. Similarly, those who speak about the fundamentals which distinguish the Malikite school will have no difficulty in seeing that these principles bear ‘Umar’s stamp more than they do that of Mālik. For much of the conduct adhered to by the people of Madinah finds its roots not only in the prophetic Sunnah itself and the traditions established by the rightly guided

caliphs, but, quite specifically, in ‘Umar’s era. As for unrestricted interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*) and the prohibition of evasive legal devices (*sadd al-dharā’i*), it was ‘Umar who first introduced these principles in both theory and practice, and it is his policies which provide the best possible application of both.

Hence, if the Malikite school must be attributed to an individual, there is no one worthier of this attribution than ‘Umar. However, the origin of this school goes beyond ‘Umar and his interpretations and judgments to Islam itself, for it is in Islam that all of ‘Umar’s teachings and practices were rooted, and it is from Islam that they sprang. It was only after the rise of Islam that ‘Umar’s experience and school came into being, upheld by the collective viewpoint of the Companions after which there came a succession of scholarly and hermeneutical links in the chain of Madinah’s jurisprudents, a chain which was brought to a close with Mālik ibn Anas.

The appellation which links ‘Umar’s fiqh with that of Mālik and which brings together all that developed between the former and the latter is ‘the Madinah school.’ It was this appellation which prevailed until Mālik’s day and thereafter, at which time it was gradually replaced, first with the term, ‘Mālik’s school,’ then with the term, ‘the Malikite school,’ in keeping with the burgeoning custom of naming schools of jurisprudence after individuals and limiting such schools to what these individuals had come to represent. An unhealthy phenomenon, the spread of this custom signaled a phase of stagnation and decadence.

Abd al-Hayy ibn al-Siddiq states, “The innovation of imitating a single man led to the development of a further innovation which was even more noxious than its predecessor, in which the adherents of each school began championing their school alone and forbidding anyone to identify with any of the other schools...There were even some who went to excess and found fault with some of the imams in ways that no reasonable person would find acceptable.”¹¹⁰

Hence, what I have to say about ‘the Malikite school’ in this section, as well as elsewhere in this book, has to do with a communal school, as it were. It was communal in nature both before and after Mālik’s day, though what most concerns us here is that which was

prior to and contemporary with Mālik and which we may term, ‘the Madinah school.’ If, then, the matter has to do with the school represented by the inhabitants of Madinah, whose authority is derived from that of the Companions and the rightly guided caliphs, and most notably, ‘Umar, it follows that this ‘school’ has no need for anyone, least of all someone like me, to champion and defend it. However, there is a need for a reminder of facts which are universally acknowledged or, at the very least, clear, especially given the long time which has passed since their initial recognition.

Of relevance in this connection is a statement made by Ibn Taymiyah who, as good fortune would have it, was not a follower of the Malikite school. Ibn Taymiyah devotes more than 100 pages of his *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* to an introduction to the Madinah school, in which he presents the basis for its superiority and authoritative status in both its roots and its branches.¹¹¹ He states, “The school which they established in the era of the Companions, their followers and their follower’s followers, is the soundest of all such schools, East and West, in its roots as well as its branches.”¹¹² Similarly he says, “Whoever gives careful thought to the fundamentals of Islam and the principles of Islamic Law will find that the fundamentals adhered to by Mālik and the inhabitants of Madinah were the soundest of all principles and rules.”¹¹³ Moreover, although he writes at length and in detail on this subject, he says, “This is a vast topic, and if we were to do a thorough investigation of the merit of Madinah’s scholars and the soundness of their principles, we would have a great deal more to say.”¹¹⁴ He also writes, “This said, there can be no doubt on anyone’s part that of all people, no one has shown greater concern for the Madinah school than Mālik whether by transmitting the narratives through which it has been passed down or by explicating its views. Indeed, neither in his own era nor since his era has anyone done more than he in this respect.”¹¹⁵

Based on the foregoing, it will be clear what I mean when I speak of the Malikite school. It will likewise be clear that it is a school with which Mālik ibn Anas was associated, and that this imam was only one of its numerous links. Even so, he was, both in his own era and thereafter, the one who possessed the most thorough understanding

of this school and who undertook the most comprehensive collection of its supporting narratives. It will thus be understood that when I speak in the pages to follow about fundamentals or principles of the Malikite school, my intent will be to say not that these principles are somehow Mālik's possession but, rather, that Mālik was their possession, as it were, both in his fiqh and his independent interpretations.

Fundamentals of the Malikite School and the Objectives of Islamic Law

In what follows we will examine the most important Malikite fundamentals of direct relevance to the objectives of Islamic Law.

1) *Unrestricted Interests**

I do not wish to concern myself here with the definition of “restricted interests” or to enter into a discussion of their validity, which entails an examination of the views of those who support or reject the concept. This and related issues have been discussed in numerous modern writings on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, including entire books and university theses, some of which will be mentioned at appropriate points later in this study.

Rather, I would like to focus on those points which have a direct bearing on the topic at hand. The first such point is that the practice of setting up the concept of benefit, or interest (*al-maṣlahah*) as a determining factor in Islamic legal rulings finds its origin in the practice of the Companions, and most notably Umar himself. We have consistent, indisputable textual evidence that this practice was engaged in by the Companions. Hence, al-Ghazālī, despite his Shafi‘ite affiliation, states that, “The Companions, may God be pleased with them, are the Muslim nation’s model when it comes to the practice of *qiyās*,* in connection with which it has been determined beyond any doubt that they relied on interests.”¹¹⁶ In so saying, al-Ghazālī is repeating what his shaykh, al-Juwaynī, had stated previously in his book *al-Burhān*, in the section thereof on *istidlāl*,* where he acknowledges the validity of *al-istidlāl al-maṣlaḥī*, or the practice

of employing human interests as a source of evidence on which to base a legal ruling, since this was done by the Companions. Indeed, this practice is frequently in evidence in their application of Islamic Law and the fatwas which they issued. On this basis, al-Ghazālī approved the practice, stipulating only that the interest being taken into consideration be similar to those interests which are explicitly recognized by the Lawgiver – a stipulation which is taken as a given by those who recognize the concept of (unrestricted) interests.

What is of greater concern to us, however, is the link between human interest, or benefit, and the objectives of the Lawgiver. Among the points which became clear in the previous section and about which more detail will be forthcoming is that the Lawgiver's objectives in their entirety may be summed up in the phrase, 'the achievement of benefits [interests] and the prevention of harm.' This link is found consistently in all rulings of Islamic Law, and most of all in the rulings having to do with customs and daily transactions.

From this it follows that any independent interpretation of the principles of jurisprudence must be based on what is termed *istiṣlāh*,* and that one's understanding of the relevant texts and the conclusions one draws from them must be based on the principle that the objectives of such texts are to achieve benefit and prevent harm. Any analogy which is drawn between one ruling and another must likewise take this principle into consideration. This is the meaning of 'consideration of human interest' (*murā‘at al-maṣlahah*) in the Malikite school. It is not simply a matter of considering relevant unrestricted interests in cases to which no explicit text or analogy applies; rather, it is a matter of bearing human interest or benefit in mind when seeking to understand any relevant text or when drawing an analogy between two rulings.

The title I have chosen for this section is based on the recognized fact that Malikite fundamentals are distinguished by their consideration for what is termed 'unrestricted interests.' Of course, the concept of 'interest' for the Malikites, as for the other schools with the exception of the Zahirite, or literalist school, goes far beyond this. However, the Malikite school, in comparison with the other schools, is more explicit in its consideration for human interests or benefits in

view of the conviction that it is these interests which embody the overall aim, or intent, of Islamic Law, as well as the specific objective or intent behind each of this Law's rulings, particularly in the areas of customs (*al-‘ādāt*) and everyday transactions (*al-mu‘āmalāt*). In the other schools, by contrast, consideration for human interests or benefits is tinged with a degree of hesitation and ambiguity. For the sake of greater clarity on this matter, let us now turn to some specific examples: it is a known fact that the Prophet prohibited many kinds of transactions involving buying and selling due to the risk and uncertainty which they entail, and due to the possible harm to which they might lead for one of the parties to the transaction. Avoidance of such harm requires the utmost clarity and precision in defining the various types of sales and their features, including prices, deadlines for delivery and payment, etc. All related rulings are subject to explanation and interpretation in terms of their bases and occasions, and the human interests and benefits involved may be clearly perceived.

However, there are many situations in which it is difficult or impossible to fulfill all conditions stipulated in such rulings, as a result of which the interests of the parties to the transaction – which are, themselves, the basis for the conditions stipulated – require a degree of leniency with respect to these same conditions and the willingness to disregard some of them. In relation to situations such as these there are two contrasting orientations. The first orientation leans toward leniency and disregard for certain conditions out of consideration for individual interests and as a means of avoiding injury and hardship; this orientation is represented by the Malikite and Hanafite schools of jurisprudence. The other orientation, by contrast, leans toward strict observance of the original conditions of sale and adherence to their associated formalities no matter what degree of difficulty this may entail; this orientation is represented by the Shafi‘ite school. Ibn Taymiyah writes,

In this connection, Mālik permits the sale of produce which is concealed underground, such as carrots and turnips and other fruits and vegetables which grow underground wholesale. He also permits, along

with the majority [of jurisprudents], the sale of broad beans and the like while still in their pods. There can be no doubt that Muslims have adhered to such practices since the days of their Prophet and continue to do so now. Nor would it serve people's best interest to do otherwise. It should not be thought that this sort of practice involves deceit or fraud; indeed, similar practices are permitted in other types of sale, since the degree of risk or uncertainty involved is slight, and since there is a need for such transactions. Both [orientations] permit them [despite their philosophical differences]; how much more likely would they be to permit them, then, if they came together [on such points of disagreement]?¹¹⁷

This orientation, then, bases its position on the fact that the element of risk and uncertainty (Arabic, *gharar*^{*}) is slight and that there is a need for the sale concerned. What this means is that the prohibition against sales involving risk and uncertainty (*bay' al-gharar*) is based on the dual assumption that (1) the element of risk and certainty is great and (2) the transaction involves harm which equals or exceeds the degree which the prohibition is intended to prevent.

Concerning the type of *gharar* which is prohibited in the prophetic traditions, al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn ‘Abd al-Barr al-Mālikī states, “The overall meaning of *gharar* is that the buying/selling being engaged in by the parties to the transaction involves an element of risk and gamble, and that there is ignorance [on the buyer's part] concerning most aspects of the goods being sold. If the degree of uncertainty concerning the goods is minor or if the element of risk is small, and if there is no intent to deceive, the transaction is not to be classified as the type of *gharar* which is prohibited, since the prohibition is directed against those who intend deceit and engage in it deliberately.”¹¹⁸

This statement provides confirmation of what was stated earlier, that transactions which entail only an insignificant degree of uncertainty and risk, for which there is an overriding need, and in which the risk or uncertainty is not intended by either party, fall outside the purview of the prohibition against *bay' al-gharar*, because the Law-giver does not prohibit that which serves an overriding interest.

Based on this interest-based perspective with its consideration for

the Lawgiver's intentions, the Malikites – in contrast with the Shafi'ites – permit the sale of goods for which a description has been provided but which have not yet been seen by the purchaser. In keeping with this position, the sale is binding if the goods are found in the end to fit the description which was given of them. The Ḥanafites, although they permit this type of sale, affirm the purchaser's right to see the goods prior to the sale even if they conform to the description given of them; in so doing, however, they cancel out its benefit and nullify its intent.

In this connection also, we have what al-Shāṭibī quoted from a book entitled *al-`Utbīyyah*, which contains statements made by Mālik and passed on by Ibn al-Qāsim who says,

I asked Mālik about the oil presses for sesame seed and radishes. [I told him that] one person brings several *ardebs*¹¹⁹ [of one thing], while someone brings several *ardebs* [of something else], after which they put everything together and press it. Mālik replied, “This practice is undesirable because some varieties of produce yield more oil than others. However, if people need to do so, it is hoped that they will do so in moderation, since they need to do that which will serve their interests. And in regard to those things which they find to be unavoidable, it is my hope that they will be granted some latitude, which I believe is acceptable.” Then he added, “And the same applies to olives.” Commenting on this statement Ibn Rushd states, “He [Mālik] softened his judgment on this matter given the necessity of the practice in question, since it is unfeasible to press a small amount of either sesame seed or radish by itself.”¹²⁰

This judgment by Mālik is not simply an example of consideration for human interests and the manner in which rulings are based thereon; rather, if one ponders it carefully, one will find that it also lays foundations and formulates principles relevant to other, analogous questions. Consequently, we find that al-Shāṭibī draws upon this judgment by Mālik in his decision to approve people's practice of combining milk brought by a number of individuals in order to produce cheese from it cooperatively as a means of avoiding undue

hardship and expense.¹²¹ Al-Shāṭibī approves this practice despite the fact that, as in the case of pressing sesame seeds and radishes collectively, it will inevitably entail some degree of unfairness and also inequality. He then concludes his fatwa with the words, “It appears to be permissible in keeping with this principle as affirmed by the [Malikite] school.” Hence, the interest-based approach clearly has a long, established history in the Malikite tradition.

Al-Shāṭibī confirms this fact elsewhere as well. In the context of discussing Mālik’s practice of confirming rulings relating to daily transactions and customs, he states, “He waxes prolix on the understanding of interest-based objectives, yet without losing sight of or departing from the Lawgiver’s intent, and without violating any of its principles.”¹²²

Prior to al-Shāṭibī, al-Qādī ‘Iyād wrote that one of the considerations given weight by Mālik’s school is the interest-based perspective founded upon the objectives and principles of Islamic Law. He states, “The third consideration calls for careful examination and for a discerning heart free of prejudice. In other words, it requires that we bear in mind the foundations and universals of Islamic Law and understand the wise purpose for which the Lawgiver established it.”¹²³ Indeed, contemporary scholar Muhammad al-Mukhtar Walad Abahu favors the view that this is the most significant distinguishing feature of the Malikite school.¹²⁴

Al-Shāfi‘ī hesitated to adopt the principle of human interests in his system of thought,¹²⁵ while Abū Ḥanīfah adopted it in the rather vague form of *istihsān*.^{*} Mālik, however, followed neither of these paths, since he did not establish his school but, rather, came upon it fully formed. It strikes one as odd, then, that Mustafa al-Zarqa considers the Malikite theory of *istiṣlāḥ* to be simply a more mature, advanced form of the Ḥanafite *istihsān*.

Concerning this he states that, “...the Malikite school, having come later in history than the Ḥanafite school, focused on the technical formulation of the principle of unrestricted interests and its associated conditions, and it was for this formulation that the Malikite school became well known.”¹²⁶

If we bear in mind what has already been stated concerning the

true nature and origins of the Malikite school, no further comment on al-Zarqa's claim is needed. However, even if we disregard all of the above, al-Zarqa's claim remains unacceptable as anything but a reversal of the facts! After all, it is an established fact based on eye witness testimony that the Ḥanafite school – and indeed, each of the remaining three schools of jurisprudence – drew upon the Malikite school and its principles, and most particularly, from Mālik himself. Moreover, if some doubt might be cast on the accounts which Abū Ḥanīfah transmitted on Mālik's authority or on his having read Mālik's *al-Muwatṭa'*,¹²⁷ no such doubt may be cast on the fact that two pillars of the Ḥanafite school, namely, Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan and Abū Yūsuf, benefited significantly and directly from Imam Mālik.

It appears that al-Zarqa has relied for his aforementioned claim on the fact that Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 AH/767 AC) was more advanced in age than Mālik (d. 179 AH/795 AC). However, this is of no relevance to the matter at hand, especially if we view it in light of other facts. Of interest in this connection is a statement with which al-Zarqa immediately follows the statement quoted above. He writes, “There then appeared the Shafi’ite interpretation which rejected both the theory of *istihsān* and the theory of unrestricted interests.” One wonders why it is that a later historical appearance is not associated with academic progress in this case as well? Why is it that the “technical formulation” of the theory of *istiṣlāh* was not given precedence, especially in view of the fact that Mālik¹²⁸ is known to have pioneered in this field?

The fact of the matter is that the place where Islam became established most fully and perfectly was the city of Madinah. It was in Madinah that, through the narratives and understanding passed down by those who first embraced the religion and the ways in which they applied it to their lives, Islam found stability and set out toward new levels of maturity. The prophetic era was then followed by the era of the caliphate, and it was the practices established by the rightly guided caliphs which served as the model to be emulated and from which to draw inspiration. All of this was embraced and understood by Madinah's inhabitants and scholars. This era was then followed

by Islam's spread to distant parts, where Muslim scholars emerged here and there, receiving what was passed down to them of the Madinan heritage and laboring diligently to understand and apply what they had received, to be guided by it, and to draw analogies between situations to which it had already been applied and new situations which had arisen in their own unique circumstances. Throughout this process, they approached the original ideal in varying degrees, subject to a wide range of circumstances and influences, not to mention their own dispositions and mentalities and their ability to apprehend the ideal for which they strove in both its generalities and its particulars.

Abū Ḥanīfah achieved insight into the interest-based objectives of the Law of Islam, an insight which he expressed through many of his interpretations of the Law and its rulings, as well as through the notion of *istihsān*. However, the notion of *istihsān* remained somewhat vague and ill-defined for quite some time, at least in attempts to convey it to others. In fact, it became nearly impossible for the Ḥanafites themselves to agree on a single, unambiguous definition of it. It was this lack of clarity in the concept and practice of *istihsān* which led Imam al-Shāfi‘ī to launch such a vehement attack against it; at the same time, however, he was receptive to various forms of *istiṣlāḥ*, from which one may conclude that he did, in fact, adopt the notion of human interests in the understanding of the Law despite his hesitation to expand on this notion after the manner of Mālik and the Malikites.

Hence, the theory of human interests in the Malikite school was not brought to maturity by virtue of the passage of time but, on the contrary, by virtue of its early appearance. That is to say, it came into existence as a fully developed theory within Islamic Law; it was then further highlighted by the Prophet's own applications thereof, after which it expanded and emerged with greater clarity when, after the divine revelation had ceased, there was an increasing need for it. This expansion and clarification took place through exemplary practices of the rightly guided caliphs, and most notably, through the practices and teachings of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

It should also be noted that the passage of time and geographical

distance from the original Islamic model contributed to such distortion and obfuscation that some Malikites themselves – such as al-Bāqillānī and Ibn al-Hājib – came to deny the validity of unrestricted interests!

As for the Hanafite concept of *istihṣān*, it is an offshoot of the theory of human interests in Islamic Law. In saying this, I do not mean necessarily that it was taken from a particular school or interpretation. Rather, it appears to have been an understanding of the texts of Islamic Law and its rulings which came directly to the great Imam. At the same time, however, and as I have had occasion to mention, it came through less clearly and took hold on a narrower scale than in the case of Mālik, the Imam of Madinah.

Istihṣān as understood and applied by Mālik has a single, clearly defined meaning, namely, consideration for human interests. Hence, the statement attributed to Mālik by his disciples that, “*Istihṣān* is nine-tenths of knowledge,”¹²⁹ can only refer to consideration for human interests in rulings based on independent interpretation. In this connection, Ibn Rushd (the grandson) states, “What *istihṣān* means in most cases is attention to human interests and justice.”¹³⁰

Moreover, if, in Mālik’s view, *istihṣān* constitutes nine-tenths of independent interpretation in the realm of fiqh, and if the meaning of *istihṣān* is consideration for human interests and justice, then it follows that the jurisprudent must never lose sight of the Lawgiver’s intent, which is to preserve human interests and justice. If he finds that there are interests which are being neglected or forfeited, then *istihṣān* requires that he determine what will restore these interests and guarantee their protection. Similarly, if he finds harm being done, *istihṣān* requires that he engage in independent interpretation and issue a fatwa to bring such harm to an end. If the jurisprudent notes legal texts which are understood in a manner which is leading to actual harm or injury or to the neglect of an interest which is respected in the Law, he will deem it appropriate (Arabic, *istaḥṣāna*) to reexamine this understanding. Similarly, if he comes upon an analogy between two rulings which is contrary to the Lawgiver’s intent to achieve justice and preserve human interests, he must realize that the analogy in question is unsound or inappropriate, in

which case he will deem it best (*yastahsinu*) not to adhere to this analogy but, instead, to rely upon the general principles of the Law. In all such situations, *istihṣān* is, indeed, nine-tenths of knowledge.

In this connection, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr quotes from a number of Mālik’s rulings and independent interpretations having to do with daily transactions and being a good neighbor. He then concludes, “All of this is, in essence, *istihṣān* and independent interpretation for the sake of putting an end to injury and harm.”¹³¹ Hence, Malikite *istihṣān* is commitment to achieving human interests and averting harm. “The word *istihṣān* as understood and applied by Mālik means adherence to the guiding rule of human interest in the absence of a legal text [relating to a particular situation]. Consequently, Mālik would abandon any analogy which was in violation of the human interests appropriate to the Lawgiver’s higher objectives.”¹³²

Al-Zuhayli writes, “The fact is that if you were to investigate all types of *istihṣān*, you would find no reason to view it as a form of independent, self-sufficient evidence. Rather, what is relied upon for the most part is unrestricted interests.”¹³³ He then continues, saying, “What *istihṣān* relies upon most is unrestricted interests. This is the interest-based *istihṣān* advocated by the Malikites.”¹³⁴

These, then, are a few glimpses into the importance which the Malikite school attaches to consideration for the human interests which it is the Lawgiver’s intent to preserve. In fact, so clear is the link between the Lawgiver’s intentions and human interests that according to one major Malikite scholar, the principles governing daily transactions and the foundations for commutative contracts consist of the following four:

1. God’s declaration, “And devour not one another’s possessions wrongfully, and neither employ legal artifices with a view to devouring sinfully, and knowingly, anything that by right belongs to others” (Qur’ān, 2:188).
2. “...God has made buying and selling lawful, and usury unlawful” (Qur’ān, 2:275).
3. The prophetic traditions having to do with *bay’ al-gharar*, that is, buying and selling which entail risk and uncertainty.

4. Consideration for the objectives of Islamic Law and for human interests.¹³⁵

Let me bring this discussion to a close with some of Imam Mālik's interpretations of legal rulings. Such interpretations draw a link between legal rulings and the human interests which they are intended to preserve, while the texts of relevance are understood in light of their objectives (*maqāṣid*) and bases (*‘ilal*).

One such interpretation is included by al-Qurṭubī in his commentary. The question has to do with the command found in prophetic traditions to offer hospitality and, specifically, the issue of when such hospitality is obligatory and when it is not. Al-Qurṭubī states, "Scholars have disagreed as to who is being addressed in such commands. According to al-Shāfi‘ī and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥakam, such commands are addressed to residents of both urban and rural areas. According to Mālik, however, hospitality is not required of city dwellers. Saḥnūn states, "Hospitality is required only of those who dwell in villages; in cities, however, travelers can stay in hotels..."¹³⁶

The reason for this is that Mālik based his interpretation on the intent and wise purpose behind the ruling concerned, namely, to meet the need of the traveler or migrant. From such an understanding it follows that if the traveler or migrant is able to find room and board and other necessities, then others are exempted from the duty to provide him with hospitality, although they may certainly do so out of kindness and the desire to do good. If, on the other hand, a traveler has no place to lodge, then even urban dwellers have a collective responsibility to provide him with what he needs. Al-Shāfi‘ī, by contrast, adhered to the apparent sense of the ruling and thus made no distinction between one situation and another, considering hospitality to be obligatory in all cases.

Similarly, there is a prophetic tradition according to which it is one's duty not to request permission to enter someone's home more than three times in succession. This tradition has been interpreted to mean that if entrance is granted after the third time, so be it; otherwise, one is to leave. Mālik, however, did not stop at the tradition's apparent meaning but looked instead to its intent. Thus, we read in

al-Qurṭubī's commentary that Ibn Wahb related that Mālik had said, "One should request permission to enter three times, and I prefer that no one go beyond this. However, if one knows that he has not been heard, I see nothing wrong with it."¹³⁷

Another example is the prophetic tradition which encourages believers to clean their teeth and gums with a *siwāk** before every prayer. Ibn al-‘Arabī states, "Scholars differ over the use of the *siwāk*. According to Ishāq, it is obligatory, and whoever deliberately neglects to do so must repeat his or her prayer. According to al-Shāfi‘ī, it is an emulation of the Sunnah associated with minor ablutions (*wuḍū'*). As for Mālik, he considers it to be a desirable practice whenever there is a change in one's mouth."¹³⁸

Similarly in relation to the practice of drying oneself off after performing minor ablutions, Ibn al-‘Arabī mentions that scholars differ in their views of this practice. Some hold that it is undesirable following both minor and major ablutions (*wuḍū'* and *ghusl*), others hold that it is undesirable after minor ablutions but not after major ablutions, while still others maintain that it is permissible in all situations. It is this third view which was adopted by Mālik, "...based on the aforementioned prophetic traditions, and because the aim of [such ablutions, namely, preparing oneself for] worship, has thus been fulfilled, it makes no difference whether one dries oneself off afterwards or not."¹³⁹

2) *Sadd al-Dharā'i**

Sadd al-dharā'i, or the prohibition of evasive legal devices, is another of the principles which the Malikite school has championed, and which it has applied more frequently and explicitly than other schools of jurisprudence. The Malikites have been followed in this by the other schools to varying extents, but least of all by the Shafi‘ites. *Sadd al-dharā'i* is one of the principles most clearly associated with ‘Umar who was known for his pre-emptive policies and deterrent measures. The principle of *sadd al-dharā'i* represents still one more aspect of consideration for the Lawgiver's intent to preserve human interests by achieving what is of benefit and averting that which would cause harm or corruption. It is this point which is of concern

to me here; as for other aspects of this principle, there is no need to introduce them into the present discussion. Rather, I will content myself with what has already been written on these subjects.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote an important chapter in which he demonstrated the major importance of the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i^c* in the Islamic religion. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, *sadd al-dharā'i^c* constitutes one-fourth of human responsibility before the Law,¹⁴⁰ an assertion upon which he bases a lengthy discussion of the prohibition against artifices (*hiyal*, singular, *hīlah*),* which he considers to be a means of preventing evasive legal devices (*dharā'i^c*, singular, *dharī'ah*) as well.

Prior to Ibn al-Qayyim, his shaykh Imam Ibn Taymiyah devoted a special work – which may or may not still be extant – to these two topics. He states, “We have expounded the principle of thwarting artifices and prohibiting evasive legal devices in a large and separate book, where we confirm the teachings and practices of the Madinah school based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the consensus of our forerunners among the Emigrants and Helpers.”¹⁴¹ The topic of *sadd al-dharā'i^c* has also been treated in works by a number of modern writers on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the most comprehensive of which I have seen is Muhammad Hisham Burhani's study entitled, *Sadd al-Dharā'i^c fil-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyyah*.

The principle of *sadd al-dharā'i^c* is based directly upon the notion of human interests and the objectives of Islamic Law. In other words, it is based on the premise that the Lawgiver has instituted the precepts of the Law for no other reason than to achieve the objectives of bringing benefit and averting harm and corruption. Hence, if these rulings come to be used as a pretext for achieving purposes other than those for which they were originally legislated or as a means by which to achieve that which is contrary to their true objectives, this is something which the Law cannot approve. Consequently, those charged with the Law's preservation cannot stand by idly while its rulings are being diverted from their original objectives on the pretext that nothing is being done in violation of their apparent meanings or outward formalities.

Before citing examples from the realm of fiqh and independent

legal interpretations, and particularly from Malikite fiqh, allow me to draw one example from the Sunnah as a means of further clarifying the foundation upon which the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i*¹ rests. The example I will discuss has to do with the giving and acceptance of gifts. Now, the exchange of gifts among relatives, friends, neighbors and others is a legitimate practice. Indeed, it is even encouraged given the role it can play in fostering goodwill, familiarity and cooperation. However, a gift might be used as an expedient by means of which to achieve some unworthy aim, whether in the short term or the long term. Hence, we have a prophetic tradition in which there is a prohibition against employees' receiving gifts. In *Sahīh Muslim* we read that the Prophet once employed a man to collect the zakah. When the man returned (after completing the collection) he said, "This is for you, and this was given to me." Thereupon the Messenger of God rose and mounted the pulpit, and after uttering praises to God he said, "What is to be said about a worker whom I send out, and who then says, 'This is for you, and this was given to me'? If he had remained at home in his father's or his mother's house, would he have received such gifts? By the One who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, no one among you will accept such a favor but that on the Day of Resurrection, he will come forth bearing it about his neck, be it a camel bellowing, a cow lowing, or a ewe bleating." He then raised his hands so high that we could see the darkest parts of his armpits and he twice repeated, "O God, has the message been heard?"

The Prophet's interpretation of the situation is clear, for the gifts concerned were not offered to this man for his own sake, nor on account of a special relationship between him and those who had offered them, nor because such gifts had been exchanged by them previously but, rather, because of the position which he held: "...in the hope that he might be of some service to us." And this, of course, is a type of corruption, abuse and favoritism which begins subtly and on a small scale, then spreads and grows increasingly more serious. A second-hand report is not the same as that of an eye-witness. What can be concluded, then, when the two are combined?!

About this Ibn al-Qayyim states,

...governors, judges, and ombudsmen are forbidden to receive gifts [from those whom they serve in these capacities]. This is the root of corruption, a vesting of authority in those who are not worthy thereof. The reason for this is simply that the acceptance of gifts from someone with whom it is not one's custom to exchange gifts may lead the recipient to meet the [gift giver's] need [for the wrong reason]. Your love for something can render you blind and deaf; and such love for things may generate a desire to fulfill the request of the person who gave the gift as a way of rewarding him...¹⁴²

It was on this basis that Malikite fiqh proceeded, just as the fiqh of 'Umar and his rightly guided policies had done before it. 'Umar did his utmost to prohibit any expedients or ruses which had the potential of leading to corruption or abuse and to curb unworthy objectives, seeking instead to preserve instead legitimate interests and the objectives of the Law. In fact, Mālik, as was confirmed later by al-Shāṭibī, was guided by the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i* in most areas of fiqh.¹⁴³ This is also confirmed by Muhammad Hisham al-Burhani, author of the comprehensive study referred to above on the subject of *sadd al-dharā'i*, who states,

Sadd al-dharā'i is an important principle of juristic induction among the Malikites. Indeed, of the four prevailing schools of jurisprudence, and others as well, none has gone as far in the adoption of this principle as the Malikites, for whom consideration of unrestricted interests is a legislative fundamental in its own right. After all, *sadd al-dharā'i* is nothing, in essence, but a practical application of consideration for human interests. Consequently, they [the Malikites] have counted it among their fundamentals and put it to use in their inductions and interpretations in all areas of fiqh, including the resolution of many practical questions. In fact, they have gone to such lengths in this effort that some jurisprudents have come to view *sadd al-dharā'i* as a distinguishing characteristic of the school which began with the imam of the 'abode of *hijrah*.¹⁴⁴

The areas of fiqh in which Mālik and the Malikites have relied most

heavily on the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*^c are those pertaining to sales, penalties and marriage. In the first area, both the Malikites and the Hanbalites regard as null any commercial transaction in which there appears to be a corrupt intent in violation of the Lawgiver's objective. An example of such a transaction is that referred to as *bay' al-'aynah*,^{*} a type of sale on credit, because it leads to the corrupting practice of usury. Other examples include the sale of grapes to someone who manufactures wine, the sale of arms to the Muslims' enemies or to those engaged in sedition and hostilities etc., all of which may be clearly seen as leading to harm. As for the Hanafites and the Shafi'ites, they draw a distinction between the legal validity of a contract and the corruption which it entails; in their view, a contract is valid so long as it fulfills all outward conditions for validity, while the intent behind it is viewed as something which must be left for God to judge.

An example of *bay' al-'aynah* would be for someone to sell a piece of merchandise on credit for \$10.00, then to buy it back in cash for \$5.00. Al-Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī, after expressing his support for a prohibition against this type of transaction, states,

If someone were to say, "You have prohibited this type of transaction for fear of ill intent on someone's part, yet you do not know the person's intent," we would reply that this is the very point behind the prohibition. In other words, given that ill intent is what is feared, a definitive position has been taken by prohibiting even its outward appearance precisely due to the impossibility of knowing people's intentions in such a situation. Hence, although Islamic Law bases its rulings on invisible, inward causes, it has allowed the outward and the visible to function in their place. An example of this phenomenon may be seen in the fact that the hardship involved in travel, which serves as the basis for certain relevant allowances, is replaced in Islamic legal rulings by the outward, visible fact of being on a journey, since the hardship itself is something which cannot be observed or measured.¹⁴⁵

In relation to marriage, the Malikites have relied on the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*^c in many rulings. Thus, for example, they forbid a person who is terminally ill to marry, and if such a person does

marry, they forbid his widow to inherit from him. However, if a woman was divorced by her husband while the latter was terminally ill, they allow her to inherit from him even if the divorce was irrevocable. In the section of *al-Muwatṭa'* dealing with divorce from someone who is ill, Mālik relates statements made by ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī, to the effect that inheritance is to be granted to a woman who had been irrevocably divorced by a husband who was terminally ill. Mālik then goes on to say,

If a terminally ill husband divorced his wife before the marriage had been consummated, she is entitled [upon his death] to half of the dowry as well as the inheritance and she is required to observe no waiting period before remarrying. If, on the other hand, he divorced her after the consummation of the marriage, the widow is entitled to the entire dowry and the inheritance. Moreover, the same applies whether, prior to the marriage, the woman had been previously unmarried, divorced, or widowed.¹⁴⁶

This approach to interpretations (of rulings relating to marriage), which was adopted by Mālik, the people of Madinah and the Companions before them, is founded upon the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i* and the prevention of harm to the wife; in other words, it is founded on consideration for her best interests and rights.

Another example of the application of the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i* in relation to rulings on marriage is that, relying on ‘Umar’s independent interpretation, the Malikites impose a permanent prohibition on marriage between a man and a woman in a situation in which the man has married the woman before the termination of her waiting period from a previous marriage:

If the man consummated the marriage and enjoyed the woman physically before the end of the waiting period, he is thenceforth prohibited from marrying her. Moreover, this judgment requires no further ruling on the matter given the written ruling by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb on this very question, and which is the ruling most widely accepted and applied in the Malikite school. If, on the other hand, the husband nei-

ther consummated the marriage nor enjoyed the woman physically until after the termination of the waiting period, and if all that occurred during the waiting period was the conclusion of the marriage contract, then ‘Umar’s position on the matter is subject to more than one interpretation. There are, in addition, two widely accepted versions of what Mālik had to say on this matter.¹⁴⁷

Yet, despite this austere inclination in the Malikite school – the purpose of which is to close the door in the face of corruption and disregard for the rulings of the Law – the mufti concerned, that is Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb, ruled that if the marriage was not consummated until after the end of the waiting period and if there is some need for the husband and wife to remain together, as when the woman has become pregnant or given birth to a child, the marriage should be considered lawful. This attenuated ruling illustrates another aspect of the interest-oriented perspective of the Malikite school based upon the principle of “consideration for differing points of view” (*murā’at al-khilāf*). In other words, the mufti chose to rule in favor of deeming the marriage lawful in view of the human interest involved and in recognition of the fact that this is the position taken by most jurisprudents of the other schools.

Ibn Lubb was once asked about a man who had a daughter in the custody of his former wife. When the girl was ten years old, her father gave her in marriage to someone in order to remove her from her mother’s custody and to exempt himself from paying child support. He replied,

Neither the mother’s custody rights nor the husband’s obligation to pay child support will be terminated until the girl’s husband has consummated the marriage, and this [will only be permitted] when the girl has matured sufficiently to tolerate intercourse. The present legal situation [i.e., the mother’s custody rights and the father’s financial obligations toward the child] is not nullified merely by the fact that the girl has been legally married, nor does her husband have the right to approach her before she becomes able to tolerate intercourse, since this would be harmful to her. [This marriage contract has been concluded]

as an expedient (*dhari‘ah*) by means of which to deprive the mother of her custody rights. Hence, the girl may not be taken out of her mother’s custody unless she is married and is old enough to tolerate intercourse.¹⁴⁸

In relation to cases in which a man elopes with a woman and cohabits with her illegally, after which he asks for her hand in marriage, a number of Malikite jurisprudents have ruled that the woman concerned is to be deemed forbidden to this man for the rest of their lives. Al-‘Alamī states, “In keeping with the fundamentals of the Malikite school, they have issued such a ruling out of consideration for the principle of *sadd al-dharā’i* and as a means of curbing corruption.”¹⁴⁹

What strikes one as odd is that the most widely accepted ruling among the Malikites on such a situation is contrary to this (in other words, in favor of allowing the eloped couple to marry), despite the fact that forbidding¹⁵⁰ the couple to marry as long as they live would be a more appropriate ruling in this type of case than it would be in the case of a man who has married a woman and consummated the marriage before the end of her waiting period following a previous marriage. Consequently, the jurisprudents who have ruled in favor of a permanent prohibition against the marriage of the persons involved in cases of elopement and cohabitation are being more consistent with the principles of the Malikite school than those who have adopted the more popular, and more lenient, ruling.

In the area of legal penalties, the Malikite school is the strictest of all the schools of jurisprudence and the one which goes to the greatest lengths to deter would-be criminals and to block all outlets to those who would commit aggression and spread corruption. In fact, al-Wansharīsī states, “Severe treatment of wrongdoers, the recalcitrant and the corrupt is a frequently adopted approach in relation to the Law and the school’s guiding principles, and is well represented within the Malikite school. Indeed, I have recorded large numbers of this type of ruling.”¹⁵¹ In so saying, al-Wansharīsī is referring to the Malikite fatwas of this type which he had collected in his encyclopedia, *al-Mi‘yār*.

The Malikite school's severity in the area of penalties includes consideration for such penalties' primary aim, namely, to deter (would-be wrongdoers) and to uproot corruption and injustice to the greatest possible extent. I do not think that this area in particular needs to be illustrated with examples and quotations. For wherever one reads in the area of rulings on the legally prescribed penalties in Islam, retribution (for murder), discretionary punishments, and legal policy, this distinctively Malikite austerity will be clearly observable. However, what I would like to draw attention to, if only by way of reminder, is that this Malikite predisposition, if you will, likewise finds its roots in the fiqh, policies and legal rulings of 'Umar who was famed for the careful attention which he lent to deterrents and discretionary punishments, and for his severity toward the corrupt, the perverse and the unjust.

3) Consideration for the Objectives of those Governed by the Law

There is significant overlap between this principle and the one discussed before it, namely, *sadd al-dharā'i*; the principle to be discussed now, however, is more general and inclusive. For in dealing with the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*, consideration may or may not be given to corrupt intent; in relation to this principle, however, we are dealing with consideration for human intentions overall, and the influence which they exert on people's conduct and the transactions which take place among them.

The principle which states, "Matters are to be judged according to their objectives" is viewed as a fundamental by virtually all the schools of jurisprudence. In fact, the *al-Aḥkām al-Adliyyah* magazine heads its list of ninety-nine principles with this one in particular, then follows it with its corollary, namely, "The crucial factor in a contract is its objectives and meanings, not its verbal content and outward forms." Despite such facts, however, and as will become clear shortly, the Malikite school remains the pioneer of the schools overall in relation to consideration for human objectives and basing rulings thereon.

As regards the relationship between consideration for human

objectives and consideration for the objectives of the Lawgiver, it may be observed in two ways. First, both of these principles have a common origin, namely, consideration for objectives and intentions and the refusal to stop at outward appearances and forms. Hence, whoever observes this principle when interpreting the words, rulings and conduct of the Lawgiver will likewise observe it when interpreting human beings' words, contracts and conduct, and whoever neglects one of these two principles will have neglected the other. Hence, the two together constitute a single perspective and single approach. As for the second way in which one may observe the relationship between human objectives and the objectives of the Lawgiver, I will leave it to al-Shāṭibī to make it clear at the appropriate point in our discussion.

This said, let us return to consideration for human objectives in the Malikite school and the manner in which it has pioneered in this area. As we saw a bit earlier, the Malikites reject the validity of sales and marriages in which there appears to be a corrupt intent or aim. This, of course, is simply one aspect of the general principle which views contracts in light of the objectives and intentions of those who enter into them. Concerning this Ibn Taymiyah states,

As for contracts: There are people who consider the verbal phrases of which a contract consists, the words by means of which affirmation and consent are expressed, and the like, to be binding in and of themselves. As for the people of Madinah, their point of reference in relation to contracts was people's customary manner of doing and understanding things. Hence, whatever people considered to be a sale, was a sale, and whatever they considered to be a gift, was a gift. This approach is the one which is most in keeping with the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and fairness.¹⁵²

An example of the application of this principle to the realm of fiqh is what is known as "fixed price sale" (*mu'ātāh*).^{*} Many small, ordinary sales fall into this category in that both parties to the transaction content themselves with a nonverbal exchange: Party 1 gives Party 2 the money, while Party 2 gives Party 1 the merchandise,

without a verbal offer or a verbal expression of acceptance or agreement. In such an exchange, one party might speak while the other remains silent, or it might take place without the exchange of any words at all or, at least, without a verbal exchange which would fulfill the conditions for a legal contract. On the validity or non-validity of this type of sale – which has become quite commonplace nowadays – there are three views:¹⁵³

(1) According to the Shafi'ites, the Zahrites and the Shi'ites, it is invalid due to the absence of a verbal offer and verbal acceptance which would serve as evidence of both parties' agreement to the transaction.

(2) According to the Hanafites and the Hanbalites, it is valid provided that the price be fixed and known, and that neither of the parties to the transaction make any statement which would be incompatible with the contract.

(3) According to the Malikites, it is valid in all situations. Hence, the contract may be concluded through action or physical exchange whenever it is clear that there is mutual consent, and whether it is the commonly accepted custom or not. This view is broader than the two preceding ones, and easier for people to apply. Hence, whatever serves as evidence of sale, licensing, partnership, authorization for one to serve as another's proxy or agent, and the like – with the exception of marriage – may serve as the basis for a valid contract, since the crucial factor is the presence of that which indicates both parties' willingness to enter into and conclude the contract.¹⁵⁴ Commenting on the Shafi'ite position on this type of transaction, al-Zuhayli states on p.70 of his book entitled *Nazariyyat al-Darūrah al-Shariyyah*, "If the truth be told, this is a superficial view."

Al-Wansharīsī tells us that when al-Shāṭibī was asked once about this type of sale, he replied, "It was Mālik's approach not to rely [solely] on the verbal content of a contract."¹⁵⁵ Al-Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī affirmed this Malikite principle even before al-Shāṭibī, saying,

Legal rulings are only tied to the words of which they consist to the extent that these words reflect the rulings' actual objectives as related to

the points which they address. If they [the words] have an apparent meaning which is inconsistent with [what is known to be] their aim, they are not to be taken as a true reflection of the objectives of the ruling concerned. The concepts of selling and buying, for example, are associated with recognized terms and meanings. Even so, God Almighty declares, “Behold, God has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return, [and so] they fight in God’s cause...” (9:111).¹⁵⁶

Hence, when the objectives of a given term or passage become apparent, they are taken into consideration and built upon, without undue importance being given to the words themselves. Moreover, when the words are of established reliability but have two or more possible interpretations, they are to be interpreted in a way which is consistent with the aim or intent behind them.

Another example of the same thing, taken also from Ibn al-‘Arabī, may be seen in his treatment of the verse in which God Almighty states, “Concerning [the inheritance of] your children, God enjoins this upon you” (Qur’ān, 4:11). He inquires into the meaning of the term “children” in this verse, asking: Does it include one’s children’s children? If, when someone makes a bequest to his children, is it to be passed on to his children’s children as well? Or, if someone gives some of his money to his children as charity, is it limited to his actual children, or does it include their children, too? In answer to these questions, Ibn al-‘Arabī returns to the matter of objectives, saying, “What people say is tied to intentions and objectives. The intention underlying a bequest (*habs*) is succession; hence, it includes one’s children’s children. The intention underlying charity, on the other hand, is to hand ownership over to someone else. Hence, it includes, specifically, those who are immediately related to the person giving the charity, whereas others would only be included if there is evidence to indicate their inclusion.”¹⁵⁷

Another area of jurisprudence in which the Malikites have labored consistently to apply the principle of objectives and intentions is that of oaths and the obligations which they may entail. Judge and jurisprudent Abū al-Walid ibn Rushd was once asked about a

woman whose husband, the town mayor, had died. She had been living with her husband in the official mayor's residence and, following his death, she swore solemnly that she would never live in that house again and that if she did, she would have to perform certain actions (by way of atonement). Following this, the new mayor married her and, since he was now living in the mayor's residence, he obliged her to live there with him. What, then, would be the legal ruling concerning her situation? Ibn Rushd replied,

This woman is not guilty of breaking her oath due to her having gone back to live in the official mayor's residence with her new husband, now the mayor of that town, since it is clear that she did not wish to return to it under circumstances other than those in which she had been with her deceased husband [that is, as an unmarried woman]. Consequently, nothing is required of her on account of her having returned there as a married woman, since she did not swear never to return under circumstances such as these. This is my view of the situation, and for which I accept responsibility, since an oath is to be understood on the basis of the situation which led to it and what is understood to have been the oathtaker's intention, not merely on the basis of what would be entailed by its verbal content. This is the principle adhered to by Mālik's school, may God have mercy on him.¹⁵⁸

Ibn Rushd supported his fatwa with analogous fatwas which had been issued by Mālik and his disciple, Ibn al-Qāsim. Then he said,

The scholars of Iraq disagree on this, holding that a person who has taken an oath is guilty of having broken his oath if he later acts contrary to the literal meaning of the words which he uttered. In other words, they give no consideration to the person's intention, the situation which gave rise to the oath, or the [deeper] meaning of what the person said. This, however, leads to manifest errors in their legal decisions, since rulings are to be based not on oaths' superficial meanings, but rather, on the true significations of the words uttered and a thorough understanding of the oath and the circumstances surrounding it. Indeed, if oaths were all taken at face value without regard for their

underlying meanings, Islam would revert to unbelief, and religion to a mere pastime.¹⁵⁹

Then, in illustration of the ignominious end to which devotion to appearances and neglect of intentions are bound to lead, he quotes the words of the Qur'an, "...worship whatever you please instead of Him" (Qur'an, 39:15). After all, if this 'command' were taken at face value, it would lead to denial of the truth and idolatry! However, the intent behind these words is to prohibit and warn. Ibn Rushd also mentions other, comparable verses from the Qur'an to illustrate the same point.

As in the case of oaths, so also in the case of vows or solemn pledges, Mālik does not consider them to be valid based on mere words devoid of serious intention. An example of such is found in an account related by Ibn Ḥabib, who tells of a desert Arab whose she-camel bolted and fled. Speaking to the camel, he said, "I swear, I'll sacrifice you as an offering on the pilgrimage to Makkah!" The man then came to Mālik and asked him about the matter.

In order to confirm what the man's intent had been before issuing a fatwa, Mālik asked him, "Did you say this in order to scold her?"

"Yes," the man replied.

"Nothing is required of you, then."

"Rightly have you spoken, son of Anas!" the man replied.

Commenting on this fatwa of Mālik's, Ibn Rushd states, "[Mālik] did not require the man to offer the she-camel as a sacrifice, since this had not been the intent behind his words. Rather, his intent had been simply to upbraid the animal, not to draw near to God by offering it up as a sacrifice. This is the most appropriate understanding of the situation. As the Prophet said, 'Actions are to be judged based on their underlying intentions'."¹⁶⁰

Among the legal rulings which the Malikites base upon a consideration for human intentions is their invalidation of the type of marriage referred to as *nikāh al-muḥallil*.* (On this matter the Malikites disagree with the Hanafites and the Shafi'ites.) The reason for the Malikites' stance on this type of marriage is that the intention behind it is a corrupt one, that is, it is not in keeping with the purposes and

objectives of valid matrimony. Ibn Taymiyah states,

There can be no doubt that the scholars of Madinah who denied the validity of both *nikāḥ al-muḥallil* and *nikāḥ al-shīghār** were more faithful to the Sunnah than the scholars of Iraq who did not do so. For it is firmly established that the Prophet pronounced a curse upon both the man who marries a divorced woman with the intention of dismissing her in order for her first husband to take her back (referred to in Arabic as *al-muḥallil*), as well as the first husband who takes back his divorced wife (*al-muḥallal lahu*) by this means. It is also an established fact that the Prophet's Companions, such as 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbās prohibited this practice, and none of them is known to have made any concession on this point. This, moreover, is in keeping with the principles adhered to by the scholars of Madinah, since one of their fundamentals is that 'intentions are of the essence of a contract.'¹⁶¹

A statement by Mālik in his *al-Muwatṭa'* on the subject of retribution for murder also illustrates his consideration for human intentions. He states,

Concerning a man who apprehends someone in order for another man to beat him, after which the man beaten dies from the beating, we say: If he apprehends the victim with the realization that the third man wants to murder him, then both of them [i.e., the man who apprehended the victim, and the one who killed him] are to be put to death on this account. If, on the other hand, he apprehends the victim on the understanding that the other man does not intend to murder him, but simply wants to give him a disciplinary beating, then the murderer is to be put to death, while the person who did the apprehending is to be given the severest punishment and imprisoned for a year for apprehending the victim, but not receive the penalty for murdering him.

Once again, we see that considering the objectives and intentions behind people's actions and words rather than taking them at face value was the approach adopted by 'Umar and the Prophet's

Companions in general. In *al-Muwatṭa'*, Mālik relates that “during the days of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, two men got into an argument and began exchanging insults. One of them said to the other, ‘Well, my father isn’t an adulterer, and my mother isn’t an adulterous!’ ‘Umar was then consulted about the matter and someone said, ‘The man was simply paying a compliment to his mother and father.’ Others, however, said, ‘There are other ways he could have complimented his mother and father. In our view, you should flog the man the prescribed number of times [for the crime of *qadhf**].’ And in fact, ‘Umar gave instructions for the man to receive eighty lashes.”

Mālik said, “We prescribe no punishment for negation (*nafy*), falsely accusing someone of unchastity (*qadhf*) or innuendo (*ta‘rīd*)* unless it is believed that the person who made the relevant statement actually had slanderous intentions. As for those who did have such intentions in what they said, they are to receive the prescribed punishment in full.”¹⁶²

This passage sums up what I have been seeking to make clear in this chapter, and which may be stated as follows:

- Mālik’s teachings grew out of an already existent school: “We prescribe no punishment...”
- The Malikite school shows special concern to prohibit evasive legal devices.
- The Malikite school looks to the objectives and intentions behind people’s words and actions and does not stop at their superficial meaning.
- This school originated with ‘Umar and his actions.
- ‘Umar relied upon the views of the other Companions with whom he consulted.
- In general, people belong to one of two groups when it comes to their manner of looking at things: Those who stop at the superficial meaning of others’ words and actions (“... and someone said,...”), and those who look to the inner realities of things, including objectives and intentions (“Others, however, said,...”). This division existed among the Companions just as it does among all other people; however, ‘Umar and the majority of the

Companions belonged to the second group, with only one of them (if he was, in fact, a Companion) belonging to the first category.

In his major work on the principles of fiqh, the great Malikite scholar Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maqqarī has compiled a list of rules which embody aspects of the Malikite orientation with respect to consideration for objectives and intentions.¹⁶³ These rules include the following:

RULE NO. §296: Questions should be dealt with in a manner which serves to counter corrupt intentions, as in prohibiting a murderer from inheriting (from his/her victim), or allowing an irrevocably divorced woman to inherit (from her former husband) if he died of a terminal illness.

RULE NO. §723: The basis for interpreting a statement which has been uttered or written with the intention of exaggeration or allusion is not its actual words, but its meaning.

RULE NO. §1082: Unlike the other schools, the Malikites consider what a person or statement appears to be saying to be no less important than what is being said literally.

In conclusion, despite what we have said earlier about the true origins of the Malikite school, I do not consider Abd Allah al-Dawudi to be speaking as a biased proponent of a particular school and its imam when he describes Mālik as,

the eminent scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, the one who served as imam by virtue of his preeminence in the realms of Hadith and traditions attributed to the Prophet’s Companions, as well as his widely attested leadership in independent reasoning and inquiry. Indeed, he shed the light of his knowledge of the objectives and wise purposes of Islamic Law upon both the jurisprudents of his own day and those of later generations.¹⁶⁴

Al-Shāṭibī and His Theory

[I]

Introduction to al-Shāṭibī

Perhaps the most comprehensive biography of al-Shāṭibī thus far is the one prepared by Muhammad Abu al-Ajfan with which he introduces both *al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt* by al-Shāṭibī and *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*¹ which contains Abu al-Ajfan's compilation of the sources and references which offer biographical information about al-Shāṭibī or discuss him in any way.² According to Abu al-Ajfan, the most important contributors to al-Shāṭibī's biography are his disciple, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Majārī in his book *Barnāmij al-Majārī*, edited by Abu al-Ajfan, and Ahmad Bābā al-Tunbuktī in his books, *Nayl al-Ibtihāj* and *Kifāyat al-Muhtāj*.

In this chapter I will focus only briefly on what is already known about al-Shāṭibī, particularly in view of Abu al-Ajfan's aforementioned compilation of known sources. I shall then offer an orderly presentation of information which is not yet known or which has not yet been compiled in the hope of offering the greatest benefit through my efforts. My introduction to al-Shāṭibī will fall under the following three headings: (1) A brief biological sketch, (2) al-Shāṭibī speaks about himself, and (3) al-Shāṭibī's correspondences.

I. A BRIEF BIOLOGICAL SKETCH OF AL-SHATIBI

Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Lakhmī al-Gharnāṭī, Abū Iṣhāq al-Shāṭibī, best known simply as al-Shāṭibī, was “the venerable, learned, realized imam, the exemplar, who had memorized the entire Qur'an and who was qualified to engage in independent interpretation of Islamic Law and its sources...”³ Al-Shāṭibī is described in a similar fashion by his later biographers, including Makhluf,⁴ Muhammad al-Hajawi,⁵ and others to be mentioned in due time.

None of al-Shāṭibī's biographers makes any mention of either the place or date of his birth, although Abu al-Ajfan has arrived at an approximation of the year in which he was born. As for his place of birth, which is a matter of greater importance, Abu al-Ajfan avoids dealing with the subject, perhaps due to a lack of evidence on which to base a conclusion. Hence he states simply, “And it was in Granada that he was raised and grew to maturity.”⁶ I have wondered myself about his place of birth given the fact that he is known as al-Shāṭibī, which is an attribution to the city of Shāṭibah.⁷ Be that as it may, it appears most likely that he was born in Granada. As for al-Shāṭibī's having grown up and spent his entire life there, there is no evidence which would indicate the contrary. No mention is made of journeys which he undertook, and he himself likewise makes no mention of anything of this sort. Nor is there even mention of his having embarked on the voyage which was most common for both scholars and others of his day, namely, the pilgrimage to Makkah.

Al-Shāṭibī's Shaykhs

Abu al-Ajfan draws a distinction between al-Shāṭibī's shaykhs who were natives of Granada and those who had come to Granada from elsewhere. This distinction is helpful, since it confirms to us that al-Shāṭibī did not become anyone's disciple outside of Granada, while at the same time it gives us an awareness of the locations beyond Granada from which he drew his knowledge.⁸ His shaykhs who were native-born Granadans included:

1. Ibn al-Fakhkhār al-Bīrī, whom al-Tunbuktī describes as having

been “an imam with unrivaled insight into the Arabic language.” He also mentions that al-Shāṭibī remained his student until his, (al-Bīrī’s), death⁹ and recited the Qur’ān to him seven times from beginning to end in its seven recognized recitations.¹⁰

2. Abū Ja‘far al-Shaqqūrī, who was a grammarian and jurisprudent with a specialization in the division of bequests among their various beneficiaries.
3. Abū Sa‘id ibn Lubb, Granada’s renowned, mufti, chief orator and teacher. A number of well-publicized disputes arose between al-Shāṭibī and Ibn Lubb, some of which will be mentioned later.
4. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Balansī, a grammarian and commentator on the Qur’ān.

As for his shaykhs who came from outside Granada, they included:

1. Imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharīf al-Tilmisānī, the most learned of his time,¹¹ and author of the book, *Miftāḥ al-Wuṣūl ilā Binā’ al-Furū‘ Alā al-Uṣūl*.
2. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maqqarī, also from Tilimsan, who authored the weighty book *Qawā'id al-Fiqh*¹² and other works.
3. Abū al-Qāsim al-Sabtī, who al-Tunbuktī describes as having been a leading scholar of linguistics.¹³
4. Abū ‘Alī al-Zawāwī, who taught in both Bijāyah (Algeria) and in Tilimsan, and who was also al-Shāṭibī’s shaykh in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Al-Shāṭibī wrote, “Our shaykh in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Abū ‘Alī al-Zawāwī, spoke to us, saying...”¹⁴ Elsewhere he states, “Our shaykh, the learned Abū ‘Alī al-Zawāwī cited examples for us during our reading of Ibn al-Hājib’s book on the branches of jurisprudence...”¹⁵ In addition, Abu al-Ajfan quotes from *Barnāmij al-Majārī* (p.119) as saying that al-Shāṭibī also studied Ibn al-Hājib’s book, *Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā* on *uṣūl al-fiqh* under al-Zawāwī’s¹⁶ tutelage.
5. Ibn Marzūq al-Khaṭīb (the grandfather) also from Tilimsan, is described by al-Wansharīsī as having been the ‘Mālik’ of his day,¹⁷ while elsewhere he dubs him ‘the shaykh of Islam.’¹⁸ Al-Shāṭibī heard Mālik’s *al-Muwatṭa'* and al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* from him based on Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Haffār’s reading thereof.¹⁹

For the names of still other shaykhs whom al-Shāṭibī mentions or on whose authority he passes on narratives, see his book *al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*.

Al-Shāṭibī's Disciples

Of al-Shāṭibī's disciples, al-Tunbuktī mentions the following three:²⁰

1. Abū Yaḥyā ibn Ḥāsim, who died as a martyr on the battlefield²¹ and is described as being “the disciple and companion of Imam Abū Ishaq al-Shāṭibī and the heir to his method.”²²
2. Judge and jurisprudent Abū Bakr ibn Ḥāsim (Abū Yaḥyā’s brother), who composed the well-known fiqh-inspired poem, *Tuhfat al-Aḥkām*.
3. Shaykh and jurisprudent Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayānī.

In addition to these three, Abu al-Ajfan²³ mentions two other disciples, namely:

4. Abū Ja‘far al-Qaṣṣār, whom al-Shāṭibī is said to have discussed various issues with before recording his conclusions in *al-Muwāfaqāt*.
5. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Majārī, who has been mentioned previously.

Al-Shāṭibī's Writings - (a) Those in Print

There can be no doubt that the most important work which al-Shāṭibī left to posterity is his book *al-Muwāfaqāt*,²⁴ in the introduction to which he mentions that he had been intending to entitle the book, ‘*Urwān al-Ta‘rīf bi Asrār al-Taklīf*, that is, “An Introduction to the Mysteries of Accountability Before the Divine Law.” The reason for this choice of title was that the book contains a great deal concerning “the mysteries embodied in accountability before this pure divine Law.”

However, he then abandoned this title in favor of *al-Muwāfaqāt* based on a vision which a certain highly respected shaykh of his had had.²⁵

Al-Shāṭibī has divided *al-Muwāfaqāt* into five parts:

PART 1 contains needed introductions to the book's theme.

PART 2 deals²⁶ with legal rulings, how they are conceptualized, and how judgments are made by means of them, or on them, whether they serve to define legal obligations (*al-aḥkām al-taklifiyyah*) or to specify causes, conditions and/or constraints on such obligations (*al-aḥkām al-waḍ'iyyah*).

PART 3 deals with the higher objectives of Islamic Law and the rulings relating thereto.

PART 4 deals with the categorization of legal evidence²⁷ and a clarification of what may be added thereto on the level of generalities and specifics. Mention is also made of the sources of the various categories of evidence and in what ways evidence may be put to use in rulings on people's actions.

PART 5 deals with rulings having to do with independent reasoning, imitation, and those who engage in one or the other; it also includes a discussion of conflict (among human interests and the like) and the manner in which a decision is made to favor one over the other, as well as questions and answers.

Al-Muwāfaqāt has been studied with great interest and appreciation ever since ancient times. However, only in modern times has it achieved the place of distinction which it truly merits, and it continues to gain ever increasing respect. In al-Shāṭibī's own day, his disciple Abū Bakr ibn Ḥāsim abridged *al-Muwāfaqāt* and entitled his abridgement, *al-Munā fi Ikhtisār al-Muwāfaqāt*, after which another of his disciples set it to verse and entitled his rhymed version *Nayl al-Munā Min al-Muwāfaqāt*.²⁸

Al-Tunbuktī describes *al-Muwāfaqāt* as “of great moment indeed, and without equal. It bespeaks al-Shāṭibī's [spiritual and intellectual] preeminence and his far-sightedness in the sciences, and most particularly in the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence.”²⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt* was printed and published in the year 1302 AH/1884

AC in Tunis, after which Mā' al-'Aynayn ibn Māmīn set it to verse and entitled his rhymed version *Muwāfiq al-Muwāfaqāt*. He then wrote a commentary on his versified arrangement and entitled the commentary *al-Murāfiq 'Alā al-Muwāfiq*. This commentary was printed and published in Fez in 1324 AH/1906 AC.

Al-I'tiṣām: In two parts, this book deals with the theme of *bida'*, or (heretical) innovations, and *muḥdathāt*, that is, practices and beliefs which are foreign to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the practices or sayings of the Prophet's Companions. Al-Shāṭibī treats the subject matter of this work by means of a staid methodology rooted in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and includes a valuable discussion of principles of jurisprudence such as unrestricted interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*) and juristic preference (*istiḥsān*).³⁰ *Al-I'tiṣām* was published for the first time by Muhammad Rashid Rida, who wrote an introduction to it and reviewed its texts. However, his review was hastily done and insufficient. Moreover, it is mentioned at the end of the book that al-Shāṭibī never completed it.

Al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt:³¹ This work consists of anecdotes, literary curiosities and 'recitations' (*inshādāt*). This book, likewise edited by Abu al-Ajfan, was published several years ago.

These, then, are writings by al-Shāṭibī which are known and in print at the present time. As for *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, collected and edited by Abu al-Ajfan, it was not composed by al-Shāṭibī himself; rather, it consists simply of miscellaneous fatwas in which al-Shāṭibī replied to his inquirers and which had been recorded here and there in written compilations of judicial cases, foremost among them being al-Wansharī's *al-Mi'yār*.

Al-Shāṭibī's Writings - (b) Those Not in Print

As for those works by al-Shāṭibī which are not in print, most of them are no longer extant. Be that as it may, perhaps the most important of these is his book entitled *Kitāb al-Majālis* (Book of Councils) in which he comments on the section of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* which deals with transactions involving buying and selling. The importance of this book is revealed in the comment made by the author of *Nayl al-*

Ibtihāj, who states, “This book contained benefits and investigations the value of which is known to God alone.” The book’s value may likewise be seen in the fact that it is the only work which al-Shāṭibī is said to have written on jurisprudence. Given these observations, I would rank this book directly after *al-Muwāfaqāt*, since the latter deals with the principles of jurisprudence and the objectives of the Law, while the former deals with the application of the principles of jurisprudence.

I have searched for this book and inquired concerning it of a number of manuscript experts, but without results. Nevertheless, it is my hope that God will lead someone from among the ‘knights’ of this field to unearth it one day and make it available to the Muslim community, and particularly to seekers of knowledge.

Oddly, al-Shāṭibī himself makes no mention of this book whatsoever in any of the works which have been published in his name. This indicates that he may have written it toward the end of his life; the other possibility is that he composed it early in his life,³² after which he destroyed it as he destroyed others of his works. Al-Tunbuktī mentions that al-Shāṭibī’s works included two books entitled ‘*‘Unwān al-Ittifāq fī ‘Ilm al-Ishtiqāq*’ (The Sign of Agreement in the Science of Etymology) and *Uṣūl al-Nahw* (The Fundamentals of Grammar). He then goes on to say that al-Shāṭibī “mentions both these books together in his *Sharḥ al-Alfiyyah*. I have seen evidence elsewhere that he destroyed the first book during his lifetime, and that the second was destroyed as well.”³³

Sharḥ al-Alfiyyah: This work, to which al-Tunbuktī makes reference, is also on the subject of grammar, being a commentary on Ibn Mālik’s well-known didactic poem entitled *al-Alfiyyah*. Abu al-Ajfan mentions that a hand-written copy of this work is located at the Royal Library in Rabat, No. 276, and that the Research Center at Umm al-Qurā University in Makkah is in the process of editing it for publication.³⁴ Concerning al-Shāṭibī’s work *Sharḥ al-Alfiyyah*, al-Tunbuktī writes, “His momentous commentary on this compendium of grammar consists of four large volumes. To my knowledge, nothing comparable has been written on this poem by way of research and investigation.”³⁵ Al-Tunbuktī concludes his discussion of al-

Shāṭibī's works by saying that, "He also composed other works, and issued numerous fatwas,"³⁶ a statement which leads one to wonder: What are these other works which he has not mentioned?

Al-Shāṭibī mentions in *al-Itiṣām* that he intends to write a book explaining the true nature of Sufism and detailing the lives of its early imams. He states,

It is my intention – if God grants me length of days, upholds me by His Grace and provides the means necessary – to write a brief model of the Sufi path which will serve as evidence of its validity and its success in approaching the ideal way of life. In this book I will seek to demonstrate that harmful, corrupt practices and innovations have infiltrated the path due to the influence of those who succeeded the righteous ancestors through whom the path had originated, claiming to be following it yet without conducting themselves in a way which is in keeping with the Law, and without an understanding of the true objectives of those who do adhere to the path.³⁷

Elsewhere in *al-Itiṣām*, al-Shāṭibī expresses an even stronger, and clearer determination to write this book, saying, "If God grants me length of days and upholds me by His Grace I will expound this matter in a book to be entitled, *Madhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* [The Sufi Teachings and Way of Life], showing the inconsistencies which have been introduced into the Sufi path."³⁸ If we realize that al-Shāṭibī did not even complete *al-Itiṣām* itself, we can only then wonder: Did death overtake him before he was able to write the book which he had hoped to? Or might he have written it as he wrote *al-Itiṣām*? Or alternatively, might he have gathered the materials for it or begun writing it without then being able to complete the task? Whatever the answers to such questions, there is no doubt about the fact that al-Shāṭibī died in the year 790 AH/1388 AC and, according to al-Tunbuktī, he died in the month of Sha'bān.³⁹

2. AL-SHATIBI SPEAKS ABOUT HIMSELF

As noted earlier, there is a dearth of detailed biographical material

on al-Shāṭibī. Indeed, if everything recorded about him by early writers were put together, it would come to no more than a few pages, notwithstanding the resounding acclaim which such biographers bestow on al-Shāṭibī's intellectual and spiritual leadership and his unparalleled writings. It is this dearth which has led us to search for further information on this great scholar, with careful attention to what was written by al-Shāṭibī himself, in hopes that we might broaden our knowledge about the character of this unique man.

Signposts Along his Intellectual Path

Al-Shāṭibī states in *al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*,

I would often hear Abū ‘Alī al-Zawāwī say: “A wise man once said, ‘No scholar may truly be said to be learned in a discipline until he has fulfilled four conditions. First, he must have achieved perfect mastery of the principles of the discipline. Second, he must have acquired the ability to speak and write about the discipline. Third, he must be aware of what is required of him in view of his knowledge. Fourth, he must have the ability to resolve difficulties and ambiguities which arise in the discipline concerned.’ It so happened that I had found these same conditions in a book by the philosopher, Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī.”⁴⁰

Al-Shāṭibī must have kept this admonition constantly in his awareness and sought to act in accordance with it in his pursuit of knowledge. After all, it was an admonition which he had received from one of his most revered shaykhs, who frequently repeated it to him and reminded him of its importance. In addition, al-Shāṭibī had come across this same counsel in the writings of the great philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, also known as “the second beacon.”

Al-Shāṭibī declares explicitly, or nearly so, his loyalty and adherence to these conditions in his own pursuit of scholarship, and he did indeed fulfill these conditions in the field of Islamic Law, both its roots and its branches. Moreover, as we saw earlier, he stipulates that any reader who wishes to benefit from *al-Muwāfaqāt* “must have a thorough grasp of the science of Islamic Law – both its roots

and its branches, both that which has been revealed and has passed down in textual form, and our understanding and interpretations thereof.” Hence if such conditions are required of those who read the book, how much more must they have been required of its author!

In his introduction to *al-Itiṣām*, al-Shāṭibī discusses this topic, saying,

...thanks be to God, from the time my mind was opened to receiving understanding and I directed myself to the pursuit of knowledge, I investigated both its rational and legal aspects, its roots and its branches, not limiting myself to one discipline at the expense of others. [In this manner I conducted myself] in keeping with the constraints of time and possibility and the disposition given me by God’s Grace. I plunged into its depths like an adept swimmer, fearlessly storming its domains... until the most munificent, merciful and compassionate Sustainer bestowed His bounty upon me and explained to me of the meanings of the Law that which I could never have hoped to comprehend [on my own].... Thereafter I braced myself to walk this path as God opened the way, beginning with the roots of the religion in both practice and belief, then moving on to its branches as founded upon these roots...⁴¹

It was undoubtedly this patient, deliberate advance and this conscientious striving for full comprehension and mastery which – together with the God-given aid toward success which he never tires of mentioning – made it possible for al-Shāṭibī to achieve the brilliance and maturity which became the distinguishing feature of all his writings, and most particularly, *al-Muwāfaqāt*.

Among the things which al-Shāṭibī relates in *al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt* is that a certain shaykh used to say of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī – that keen-sighted Mu‘tazilite scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh* – “If Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī disagrees with someone on an issue, it will be difficult to refute his position.”⁴² This could only be said, of course, of someone who has mastered his subject matter and has full command of the arguments at his disposal. The reason I mention this is that similarly, if al-Shāṭibī made up his mind about something, it would have been a difficult thing indeed to shake his resolve, much

less to prove it invalid, and he owed this quality to his deliberateness, his mastery and his thorough understanding of matters. These same virtues may help to explain the relatively small number of al-Shāṭibī's writings and the fact that he is said to have destroyed some of his own compositions, and this despite his extraordinary intellectual standing. For he may have written some of these early in his life, after which he judged them not to be worthy of public circulation. Indeed, these very scruples may also be the secret behind the wide and growing acceptance which al-Shāṭibī enjoys today.

Still another lustrous hallmark of al-Shāṭibī's intellectual life was his method of writing. This method is distinguished by two features which may be viewed as an extension of those personal qualities already mentioned. They are: (1) a deliberate, long-term investigation of his topic before he undertook to write, and (2) consultation with others concerning what he wrote. In relation to his writing of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī makes reference to the protracted suffering which it entailed, saying,

When the secret which had been so well concealed manifested itself, and when God in His bounty granted me access and guidance to that which He willed to reveal thereof, I proceeded to record its wonders and gather together its scattered pieces from the most specific to the most general, citing the evidence thereof from the sources of Islamic rulings with attention to every detail. In so doing, I relied upon all-inclusive inferences rather than limiting myself to isolated particulars, demonstrating the textual and rational foundations [of Islamic rulings] to the extent that I was enabled by grace to elucidate the objectives of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Then I sought guidance from God Almighty as to whether it was His will for me to string these precious pearls, assembling these treasure troves into explanations which would trace them back to their origins and be a source of assistance toward their comprehension and acquisition. As a consequence, they were brought together to explain the fundamentals of jurisprudence, and their splendid threads were woven together into a book in five parts.⁴³

At the end of his introduction to the book he writes, "It is the right

of the thoughtful reader, if he should find some lack therein, to complete it. However, let him regard with kindness [the] one who was companion to both day and night, who exchanged leisure for toil, and slumber for wakefulness in order that he might present him [the reader] with the sole fruit of his earthly days, the work of a lifetime.”⁴⁴

Similarly in regard to his writing of *al-Itiṣām*, al-Shāṭibī says,

I continued to trace the innovations to which the Messenger of God had drawn attention and against which he had warned.... Then, after the passage of many days and ceaseless investigation, I came to perceive a set of principles relating to both innovations and practices based on the example of the Prophet, principles whose rulings are confirmed by the Law. Their branches have far-reaching ramifications, yet they are ordered by these same principles, or roots. Rarely will one find such principles arranged in the order which presented itself to my mind, an order which has inspired me to disseminate them widely.⁴⁵

As for al-Shāṭibī’s practice of consulting others concerning what he was writing, we saw earlier that during his composition of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, he would inform his astute disciple, Abū Ja‘far al-Qaṣṣār of some of the issues with which the book was to deal and discuss them with him before committing them to writing. Similarly, when al-Shāṭibī began to consider writing *al-Itiṣām* and was uncertain as to whether to proceed or not, he sought counsel from loved ones and confidants among those possessed of learning. He relates this development by saying,

I proceeded to discuss the matter with some of the brethren who were nearest and dearest to my heart and who were a balm to my ailing soul, for they were of the opinion that it [the publication of my findings] was a legitimate task about which there was no reason to feel uncertain, and that in view of the needs of the day, there could be no doubt that it was a most urgent duty. Hence, I prayed to God for guidance concerning the writing of a book...⁴⁶

Al-Shāṭibī's Ordeal

Something else about which we learn primarily from al-Shāṭibī's (own) writings is the ordeal of persecution through which he passed. Even his principle biographer, Aḥmad Bābā al-Tunbuktī, makes only passing mention of the matter in a verse of poetry which he quotes from al-Shāṭibī. Al-Tunbuktī states,

The following is among the verses which he composed when he suffered affliction on account of various innovations: "I have been afflicted, O people, in myriad ways, by those whom I have treated with gentle courtesy, till it nearly proved the death of me. To ward off harm is one thing, to bring benefit another, yet God is my sufficiency in both reason and faith."⁴⁷

Al-Shāṭibī speaks about his ordeal with religious innovations and their adherents in the introduction to *al-Itṣām*.⁴⁸ He had challenged certain commonly held concepts relating to sermons and the functions of the prayer leader, or imam, desiring to conduct himself in these realms in a manner consistent with knowledge and truth. However, in the process he found himself at loggerheads with certain baneful customs and religious innovations of the sort which had been unknown to the Prophet and his Companions but which had become widespread among the people of his day. Such customs and their associated beliefs had taken such firm hold that they were the daily fare of young and old alike. In the beginning al-Shāṭibī was confused and hesitant: Should he go along with prevailing customs and innovations? Or should he hold firm to the evidence at his disposal and the conduct for which it called, defending the Sunnah and its dictates? However, his hesitancy was short-lived, for the truth was too clear for him to deny.

And thus it was that he rose to the occasion and set out to fulfill his mission, certain, as he puts it, "that to perish [while] emulating the Sunnah is deliverance, and that people will avail me naught if I have not God by my side. I approached the matter of reform in certain matters gradually. Even so, all hell broke loose against me, the fires of reproach were kindled beneath me, and censure's arrows

rained down upon me. I was branded a heretic and reprobate, relegated to the ranks of the foolish and ignorant..."⁴⁹

Accusations and slanderous fabrications came against him in steady succession:

1. He was quoted as having said that prayers of supplication are of no avail, when all that he had done was to break with the practice of communal supplication when he served as people's prayer leader.
2. He was associated with the Shi'ites and the Rafidites* and also accused of hating the Prophet's Companions simply because he did not adhere to the practice of mentioning the rightly guided caliphs in his sermons.
3. He was accused of approving disobedience to the imams because he did not mention them in his sermons, despite the fact that in this omission of his he was emulating the practice of the pious ancestors.
4. He was accused of extremism and overstrictness because he made it a practice to issue fatwas which reflected the (Malikite) school's most widely accepted views and avoided issuing fatwas based on weakly supported or 'irregular' statements, despite the fact that this was also the practice adhered to by others of the school's knowledgeable imams and scholars.
5. He was accused of enmity toward God's righteous saints, when all he had done was to censure "those dervishes who introduce innovations and violate the Sunnah...who claim to be associated with the Sufis yet fail to emulate them."⁵⁰
6. It was claimed that he was in violation of the Sunnah and the Muslim community, "a claim which they base on the [notion that] the community which we [as Muslims] have been commanded to emulate – namely, the community of those being saved from spiritual death – is represented by the practices most commonly adhered to among them whereas, unbeknownst to them, the community [which Muslims are commanded to emulate] is

represented by the practices which were adhered to by the Prophet, his Companions, and those who emulated them in virtue.”⁵¹

Yet, despite this all-out campaign and the grave accusations which had been leveled against him, al-Shāṭibī remained true to the convictions dictated to him by his allegiance to what he knew and his sense of duty. It was thus in an atmosphere charged against him that he composed *al-Itiṣām*, which may be viewed as the most significant work ever written on the subject of religious innovations in Islam.⁵²

In this book we find an extended discussion of a certain “shaykh of the age,” who had issued a fatwa against “the mosque’s imam” for discontinuing the communal prayer of supplication following the ritual prayers, claiming that such supplications were not the practice of the Prophet and the imams who came after him. The aforementioned opposed the imam, replying to his views “in a manner which was inconsistent with the views held by those well-established in knowledge, although he claimed to have achieved through his reply all that he could have hoped to.”⁵³

Oddly, al-Shāṭibī does not name the shaykh in question despite the fact that his discussion of him goes on for twenty pages.⁵⁴ The fact is, however, that his opponent is none other than his own shaykh, Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb, renowned Mufti of Granada, whose response to said imam is found in Question 7 of the eight questions addressed to Ibn ‘Arafah, and which will be discussed in the next section dealing with al-Shāṭibī’s correspondences. The response given there by Ibn Lubb⁵⁵ is the same response which al-Shāṭibī refutes in *al-Itiṣām* point by point, and part of which is his witty statement in justification of innovations, “Just as new judgments are issued for people to the extent that they devise new forms of immorality, so also are new enticements to virtue introduced to the extent that they devise new forms of indifference.”⁵⁶

In this charged atmosphere, al-Shāṭibī continued to issue his fatwas in opposition to religious innovations, a good number of which are included by al-Wansharīsī in *al-Miyyār*, particularly in Volume 11.⁵⁷ It appears that al-Shāṭibī’s position on this issue had become

well known in his day, as is indicated by his reply to a certain inquirer⁵⁸ in which he states, “You are familiar with my teachings on this point, so there is no need for me to repeat them.”⁵⁹

It also appears that al-Shāṭibī’s positions censuring what he perceived to be wrong and championing the Sunnah had a palpable effect on his own life. Al-Wansharīsī has recorded other correspondences which took place between al-Shāṭibī and “some of his companions” in this connection. One such quote by al-Wansharīsī reads, “Abū Ishāq wrote to one of his companions, saying, ‘As for all other things you wrote about in your letter concerning misfortunes, trials, and objections, they are evidence of a single reality, namely, that the person who seeks truth in our generation is an alien, and that the person who speaks the truth will be treated unjustly. Of this we have an example in our righteous forebears’.”⁶⁰ (Then, addressing the same correspondent, al-Shāṭibī continues,) “I then received news that your appointment as imam had been delayed and that someone else had been given precedence. However, ‘...it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you, and it may well be that you love a thing the while it is bad for you: and God knows, whereas you do not know’ (Qur’ān 2:216).”⁶¹

Al-Shāṭibī urges his companion to persevere in declaring the truth and carrying out the trust entailed by his learning as long as he can find those receptive to his message and so long as he can perceive that his efforts are bearing fruit. He states, “...Your words have had a visible, salutary effect in relation to many of these matters.⁶² So how can we fail to declare the truth? This would be unthinkable unless you found no one willing to receive it, and God forbid that we should ever see the day when such is the case.”⁶³

Al-Shāṭibī also received word that one of his companions had abandoned the Sunnah after having been committed to it and had gone back to complying with the common people in their innovation. Hence, al-Shāṭibī wrote him a letter in which he stated, “..If this is because you have found such an innovation to be the correct path, then why did you not explain this to the one who loves you in order that we might help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness? If, on the other hand, you have taken this turn in order

to ensure your livelihood, then you are accusing your Lord, Glory be to Him, of not being able to guarantee your sustenance. And if it is for some other reason, then make it clear to me.”⁶⁴

Al-Wansharīsī then adds, “He would strengthen his companions’ resolve and urge them to endure with patience any tribulations which came their way as a result of their spreading the truth. When one of al-Shātībī’s companions wrote to him complaining of the suffering he was having to endure on this account, he replied, ‘...Have no fear, for God is with you so long as you seek His Face in all that you do and persevere in following the truth and walking the path of righteousness. Other people’s approval will avail you nothing before God, but God Himself will be our Friend and Protector just as He has been for His righteous servants’.”⁶⁵

3. AL-SHATIBI’S CORRESPONDENCES

Al-Shātībī’s correspondences are a phenomenon which is bound to draw the attention of those who read *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-Itiṣām*, where he makes frequent mention of the fact that he corresponded with this or that shaykh, including the shaykhs of Morocco and Tunisia concerning this or that matter or question. Although al-Tunbuktī mentions al-Shātībī’s having engaged in dialogues with a number of the scholars of his day, he does not state explicitly that these dialogues – or many of them, at least – took place through written correspondence. Rather, the word which he uses suggests that the exchange in question was a direct encounter. He states, “He spoke with many imams concerning problematic questions. Those with whom he spoke included his own shaykhs and others, such as al-Qabbāb, the Judge of Cordoba, al-Qashtālī, Ibn ‘Arafah, and Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbād. He also took part with them in discussions and consultations which revealed his eloquence and eminent standing.”⁶⁶

However, further investigation reveals that the ‘speaking’ referred by al-Tunbuktī with these and other scholars of Morocco and Africa took place through written correspondence, a fact which will become even clearer in what follows. I was spurred to follow up on the

matter of these correspondences by the fact that, as al-Tunbuktī points out, they dealt with questions of a problematic nature and involved discussions and consultations with individuals who were, at that time, the leading figures of the (Malikite) school. What lends even greater significance to this topic is that al-Shāṭibī frequently used such correspondences as the basis for the formulation of principles and opinions of the utmost importance. Despite this fact, however, he hardly makes any mention of them apart from a few scattered allusions!

I thus found myself impelled to look into these correspondences and to gather what I could of their threads. In the course of this effort, I benefited greatly from *al-Miyyār*⁶⁷ by Abū al-‘Abbās al-Wansharīsī.

Correspondence with Ibn ‘Arafah (al-Tūnisī)

Let us begin with Part 6 of *al-Miyyār*, where we find the following: “These are questions which were written in Tunis by some jurisprudents [or, a certain jurisprudent] of Granada to the most perfectly realized jurisprudent, imam, scholar, mufti, orator, teacher, and reciter of the Qur’ān, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arafah, may God be pleased with him...”⁶⁸ This introduction obviously raises a number of questions: Were these questions written by one person, or more than one? Who was this person, or who were these people? And were the questions actually written in the city of Tunis, or is this simply an error?⁶⁹

The eight questions and Ibn ‘Arafah’s replies thereto begin and end⁷⁰ without any mention of who posed them. It appears that the identity of the ‘Granadan’ questioner has been deliberately left obscure, since we find the same obscurity in *Sharḥ Hudūd Ibn ‘Arafah* by al-Raṣṣāq, who discusses the Granadan questions in his section on “consideration for opposing viewpoints,” where he indicates that the questioner is a single person, but does not identify him.⁷¹

Nevertheless, repeated readings of the questions and comparisons of them to others have led me to the firm conclusion – the basis for which I will clarify in the pages to come, God willing – that the person who posed these questions was none other than Abū Ishāq al-

Shāṭibī himself. These questions are of major importance given what they reveal to us about al-Shāṭibī's interests and his intellectual character; they are, in addition, of importance in and of themselves since they are not merely questions, but rather, points of view supported by the most cogent evidence on issues of academic significance (granting, of course, that some of the issues are of less significance in the present day). In view of these considerations, then, I have provided a summary of them below:

Question 1: Jurisprudents of the Malikite school will find that on any given issue there may be several conflicting opinions, all of which are attributed to Imam Mālik; indeed, there may be as many as three or four such conflicting statements, yet they base their fatwas on all of them despite the inconsistency among them, and despite the fact that such inconsistency suggests that (at least) one of the statements has been abandoned and should therefore no longer be applied. Such a statement is comparable to legal evidence which has been declared null and void. Moreover, scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* are in agreement that if two conflicting statements are attributed to a single religious authority, and if it is not known which of the two statements preceded the other, neither of them is to be used as legal evidence due to the possibility that the one used might be the one which the authority in question had abandoned.

Question 2: The second question, which is similar to, and based on, the first, reads thus: If there are incompatible accounts within the school (of what was said by Mālik), then is it valid for someone to say, "This is the Malikite school's position on this matter," when all he means is that one of these accounts supports this position? And if someone says such a thing, will he be justified in attributing to Mālik a point of view which he is not certain that Mālik actually espoused?

Question 3: Jurisprudents frequently refer to statements found in Mālik's *al-Mudawwanah* or elsewhere and interpret them in the various ways their words permit, after which they base their judgments on their understanding of them. Not only this, but they frequently

rely for evidence upon their understanding of statements by Ibn al-Qāsim and others, and not only on statements made by Mālik himself. Now, even in dealing with the words uttered by the Lawgiver, reliance upon one's own understanding of these words is known to lead to disagreement among different interpreters. How much more, then, will this be the case in relation to statements made by mere human beings, characterized as they are by inadequacy, oversights and interpolations?

Question 4: Mālik and his school have become well known for what is known as ‘consideration for opposing points of view,’ a principle upon which certain Malikite fatwas are based. For example, the Malikite school may have taken such-and-such a position on a given issue or question.

If, then, the ruling on a case or an action which has been committed is in conflict with the Malikite school’s position but is consistent with the position of some other school or scholar, then the fatwa issued by a Malikite jurisprudent, after the ruling has been issued or the action has been committed, may endorse said ruling or action and deem it valid⁷² in keeping with the view held by the opposing school which acknowledged such an action or ruling as valid in the first place.

The problem which arises here, and which al-Shāṭibī raises is that in such a case, the Malikite scholar will have forgone the evidence which he believes to be valid – or, at the very least, to have more in its favor – in order to act in accordance with evidence which he believes to be invalid – or, at the very least, to have less in its favor; moreover, he will have deemed permissible, subsequent to its commission, an action which had not been permissible prior to this!

Question 5: Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd and others, such as al-Qarāfī, considered it a form of piety to eschew disputes over opposing viewpoints. The basis for this position of theirs was that matters about which there are opposing viewpoints (that is, concerning what is or is not permissible) constitute a type of judicial ‘gray area’ (*shubhah*) which, according to one Prophetic tradition, we are urged to avoid. Hence, as a means of demonstrating piety and avoiding such gray

areas, we are to steer clear of disputes over opposing viewpoints by simply abstaining from whatever is the subject of dispute.

This position leads to difficulties, one of which is that we will have relegated a large portion of the Law to the realm of the obscure (*al-mutashābihāt*) whereas in the realm of Islamic Law, those matters which are obscure are exceptions, not the rule. The second difficulty which results from this position is the great hardship which people will have to endure in order to be pious, whereas undue hardship and difficulty are definitively precluded by the Law.

Question 6: Someone who is answerable before the Law may, out of ignorance and mere conjecture, do something without knowing the legal ruling on his action. Such an action, which might fall within the realm of acts of worship or some other realm, may take a form which is judged to be valid by some scholars and invalid by others. The question, then, is: Should such an action be deemed to have fulfilled this individual's obligation before the Law, bearing in mind that the person undoubtedly intended to fulfill this obligation by doing what he did?

Question 7: An imam in Granada⁷³ abandoned the practice of offering a communal supplication following ritual prayers based on the conviction that this practice is an innovation which conflicts with what is known to have been the custom of the Prophet and the imams who succeeded him. Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb responded to this imam's decision in a treatise entitled, *Lisān al-Adhkār wa al-Da‘awāt mimma Shara‘a fī Adbār al-Šalawāt* (Invocation of the Divine Name and Supplications: A Legitimate Practice Following Ritual Prayers). In this treatise Ibn Lubb claimed that communal supplications following ritual prayers have a legitimate basis generally speaking, and that the fact that they were not among the customs of the pious ancestors need not be taken as evidence that they should be forbidden (granting, at the same time, that it indicates the permissibility of foregoing them). He likewise claims in this treatise that communal supplications are a commendable innovation which offers benefits to people. The problem which arises here is that any-

one who introduces an innovation into the religion may defend it with these very arguments, putting it forward as a “commendable innovation” without there being any (definitive) criterion by which to distinguish between those innovations which are legitimate and those which are not.

Question 8: A certain public orator abandoned the customary practice of offering supplication on behalf of the Prophet’s Companions following his sermons, mentioning them only when he would relate some hadith on their authority. He likewise ceased mentioning the sultan in his sermons, claiming that all such things are innovations and citing statements by Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām al-Shāfi‘ī to support his claim. Upon investigation of the matter, certain seekers of knowledge ascertained that the Prophet and the four rightly guided caliphs did not engage in these practices, nor did any of the governors during their caliphates. Nevertheless they concluded, saying, “Yet such practices continue, so perhaps they have some basis.” News of the controversy reached Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb, who denounced vehemently said imam. He accused him of being a rejecter of the Companions and thus came to the defense of the commonly held view, saying that a consensus among Muslims was sufficient evidence that such practices ought to be approved.

The question which arises here is: When we find that the practices commonly adhered to by people are in conflict with what is written in the Law and with the practices known to have been adhered to by the pious ancestors, scholars and those qualified to engage in ijtihad, are we to approve currently prevailing practices and abandon both the Law and the example set by our forebears? If so, then how will the Sunnah continue to be of any effect? And is a consensus devoid of the approval of those qualified to engage in ijtihad – as often occurs in later times – to be considered a sufficient argument in something’s favor even if it violates the consensus of the first generation of Muslims, including the Companions and others?

These, then, are the questions⁷⁴ raised by al-Shāfi‘ī and which are, in reality, closer to being answers than questions. Moreover,

they reveal the extent of his commitment and loyalty to the requirements of legal evidence and to the premises rooted in the fundamentals of jurisprudence.

After presenting Ibn ‘Arafah’s responses,⁷⁵ the compiler states, “I said: Abū al-Qāsim al-Suyūrī was asked whether he considered the practice of offering supplications for sultans in sermons to be valid or invalid, to which he replied...”⁷⁶ Then, following Abū al-Qāsim’s response, he states, “Moreover, a certain person⁷⁷ wrote to Abū al-‘Abbās, that is, my master, Ahmād al-Qabbāb, with a question about the aforementioned principle of ‘consideration for opposing points of view’...,”⁷⁸ and once again, he does not name the person who posed the question.

Nevertheless, the question is an abridged version of the fourth of the eight questions addressed to Ibn ‘Arafah. In fact, the central phrases of which the two questions consist are identical. One such phrase is,

It thus appears that the [most weighty] evidence is what one should adhere to. In other words, wherever the evidence leads, one must follow. Whenever a qualified scholar finds that one of two pieces of evidence has more in its favor than another – and even if the more cogent evidence only slightly outweighs its counterpart – it is this evidence which must be relied upon while all other evidence is to be disregarded in accordance with the recognized principles of jurisprudence. It follows, then, that when a qualified scholar defers to someone else’s point of view, he is approving evidence which, from his own point of view, has less in its favor, and disregarding the evidence which, as he sees it, has more in its favor and which he is under obligation to adhere to.⁷⁹

Al-Wansharīsī makes no direct mention of the response given by the shaykh to whom the question was addressed, that is, al-Qabbāb. However, prior to this he states,

I said: This matter was investigated by and Imam Abū Ishaq al-Shātibī, who wrote about it on more than one occasion to scholars in Fez and

Africa [Tunis] who were his contemporaries. Moreover, his discussion thereof included all manner of sound opinions and well-founded points of view. Imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Arafah offered the reply quoted above, while the jurist Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qabbāb replied as follows...⁸⁰

It thus becomes apparent that the person who concerned himself with this question and who corresponded with others about it was Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, and that it is the same question which appears among the eight summarized above. This is an initial piece of evidence indicating that al-Shāṭibī was the person who posed both questions. Even more telling, however, is the verbatim correspondence between the two questions' principle phrases, as well as al-Wansharīsī's statement that, "Imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Arafah, may God have mercy upon him, offered the reply quoted above," while "the reply quoted above" is his response to the person who posed the eight aforementioned questions. Hence, the author of the set of eight questions is the same person who posed this question and addressed it to the scholars of Fez (al-Qabbāb) and Africa ('Arafah).

Al-Shāṭibī himself mentions that he corresponded with a group of shaykhs concerning the matter of 'consideration for opposing points of view'.⁸¹ In *al-Muwāfaqāt* he mentions the problem which arises in connection with the question, then he states, "I asked a group of shaykhs with whom I had come into contact about the matter..."⁸² In *al-Itiṣām* he writes, "I had written to the countries of Morocco and Africa concerning the matter of 'consideration for opposing points of view' in light of a difficulty which arose in connection with it in two respects."⁸³ He then describes the difficulty with the same phrasing found in the text which I quoted earlier from al-Wansharīsī's *al-Miyyār*.

Al-Shāṭibī states, "The reply I received from one of them was more plausible, while the other's reply was less so.⁸⁴ However, I discussed the matter further with one of them, namely, my brother and mentor Abū al-‘Abbās ibn al-Qabbāb, may God's mercy rest upon him, and in response he wrote the following..."⁸⁵ It may be inferred from what he states here, and from his mention in *al-Muwāfaqāt* of his having written to a group of shaykhs, that he did not limit his cor-

respondence to Ibn ‘Arafah and al-Qabbāb but that, in addition, he wrote to other scholars of Fez and Tunisia in particular.⁸⁶

Let me return now to the matter of al-Shāṭibī’s being the person who posed the set of eight questions addressed to Ibn ‘Arafah, and in particular, to Question 5, where the questioner notes difficulties with al-Ghazālī’s, Ibn Rushd’s and al-Qarāfī’s view that it is an expression of piety to avoid disputes over opposing viewpoints by abstaining from whatever is the subject of dispute. The questioner states,

There is substantial⁸⁷ disagreement over most questions of jurisprudence, and by comparison with those questions over which there is disagreement, those about which there is agreement are few. Consequently, the majority of issues relating to Islamic Law come under the category of the obscure or ambiguous (*al-mutashābihāt*), which is contrary to the purpose for which the Law was established. In addition, it causes piety to become a source of severe hardship brought by the Law, since [given this perspective], there will not be a single expression of worship, a single daily transaction, or a single matter having to do with human accountability before the Law but that it is colored by some dispute which one is required to avoid, the ramifications of which are not difficult to imagine...⁸⁸

In *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī states,

...Many later thinkers have deemed it necessary to avoid them⁸⁹ over actions which are obligatory under the Law, and they have placed questions over which there is disagreement in the category of the obscure. I continued for a long time to find this position problematic until I wrote concerning it to Morocco and Africa. However, I received no reply which I found fully satisfactory. Rather, one of the difficulties which were raised⁹⁰ was that there is considerable disagreement over most issues [relating to jurisprudence]; this causes most questions relating to Islamic Law to fall under the category of the obscure and ambiguous, which is contrary to the purpose for which the Law was laid down. In addition, it causes piety to become the source of the severest hardship,

since for the most part, there is no expression of worship, daily transaction or matter having to do with human accountability before the Law which is not colored by some dispute which one is required to avoid, the ramifications of which are not difficult to imagine...⁹¹

As for the reply which al-Shāṭibī did not find to be fully satisfactory, he quotes it as follows: “One person replied by saying that questions over which there is disagreement and which fall in the category of the obscure are those in which the evidence for the opposing positions are equal in weight or very similar. However, this could not be said of most issues relating to jurisprudence; on the contrary, for someone who gives careful thought to the matter, only very few of them could be described in this manner. This being the case, those points which may be described as obscure will be only a tiny fraction of the total... And as for piety as such, even if we limit our discussion of it to this particular form, it is rigorous and difficult, and is only attained by those to whom God has granted the ability to focus inwardly on the reasons for which forbidden actions have been forbidden. As the Messenger of God declared, ‘Paradise is hedged about by hardships.’ This is the reply he offered. Hence I wrote to him, saying...”⁹²

A comparison of Ibn ‘Arafah’s reply to Question 5 as recorded in *al-Mī‘yār* with the reply just quoted by al-Shāṭibī makes it clear that the two replies are one and the same. Similarly, a comparison of the two questions indicates that they were both posed by a single person; in short, the questioner was al-Shāṭibī and the respondent was Ibn ‘Arafah. In order to facilitate the comparison, I am including in what follows the relevant part of Ibn ‘Arafah’s reply. He states,

What they mean⁹³ by saying that points about which there is some dispute fall in the category of the obscure is that the points over which there is some dispute include only those questions in relation to which the evidence for the opposing positions are equal in weight or very similar. However, this could not be said of most issues relating to jurisprudence. On the contrary, for someone who gives careful thought to the matter, only very few of them could be described in this manner.

This being the case, those points which may be described as obscure or ambiguous make up only a tiny fraction of the total.⁹⁴ He⁹⁵ also states that, ‘Piety has become a source of the severest hardship’ ...

Ibn‘Arafah continues, saying,

This is an error resulting from his premise that most questions relating to jurisprudence fall in the category of the obscure, whereas we have shown this premise to be false. And as for piety as such, even if we limit our discussion of it to this particular form, it is rigorous and difficult, and is only attained by those to whom God has granted the ability to focus inwardly on the reasons for which forbidden actions have been forbidden. As the Messenger of God declared, “Paradise is hedged about by hardships.”⁹⁶

We find in Ahmād Bābā al-Tunbuktī’s biography of Ibn‘Arafah that he was once asked from Granada about the statement which the imam had retracted.⁹⁷ He does not mention who posed the question, but a comparison reveals that the question which was addressed to Ibn‘Arafah from Granada is the same as the first of the set of eight questions mentioned above.

In other words, it has to do with al-Shāṭibī’s question; however, Ibn‘Arafah’s reply as recorded by al-Tunbuktī contains additions which are not found in the reply recorded by al-Wansharīsī in *al-Mi‘yār*. This same question was addressed – likewise from Granada – to Imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharīf al-Tilmisānī (*Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, 262) without any mention of the inquirer’s identity. It is a known fact, however, that al-Sharīf al-Tilmisānī was an eminent shaykh of al-Shāṭibī’s who visited Granada.

Correspondence with al-Qabbāb

In Part 1 of *al-Mi‘yār* we read the following: “Abū al-‘Abbās Ahmād ibn Qāsim al-Qabbāb, an imam of Fez and among those who have memorized the Holy Qur‘an, was once asked about the ruling on offering supplications following ritual prayer.”⁹⁸ There is no indication of the identity of the person who posed the question; in fact,

the question itself is unclear, since the actual text of the question is not provided as it has been for previous ones, nor are any of its details mentioned. Nor does the response reveal anything about the inquirer's identity, status or position. Even so, my attention was arrested by the fact that al-Qabbāb opens his response with the following definitive judgement: "My position, like that of those with knowledge of such matters, is that this is a reprehensible innovation."⁹⁹

The question appears to have to do with supplication in general following ritual prayers; however, this ruling could not possibly apply to supplication in general following ritual prayer, since this is a legitimate and even recommended practice. This conclusion is likewise supported by the fact that the evidence upon which the response is based has to do with the supplications offered by an imam.

Moreover, knowing as I do of al-Shāṭibī's intense preoccupation with this question, especially after encountering personal difficulties in this connection when he "challenged certain commonly held concepts relating to sermons and the functions of the prayer leader, or imam," and knowing of his written exchanges with his "brother and mentor" al-Qabbāb, it occurred to me that al-Shāṭibī might possibly be the person who posed this question. I was brought to certainty concerning this point when, during re-examinations of *al-I`tiṣām*, I found al-Shāṭibī citing the same evidence which is cited in al-Qabbāb's response to this question and even employing the same expressions found there.¹⁰⁰ After quoting the better part of the response, he states, "A certain shaykh of ours from whom we have benefited has said,"¹⁰¹ after which he quotes the remainder of al-Qabbāb's response and its supporting evidence adding, "This is what the communicated after deeming regular supplications following communal ritual prayers¹⁰² to be a reprehensible innovation..."¹⁰³

In Part 11 of *al-Mi`yār* we find another question of unknown origin. The compiler states, "Abū al-`Abbās al-Qabbāb was asked about a matter which will become clear through his response. He writes,

Praise be to God.... My brother, may God preserve your goodwill and continue to bless you with good fortune by His bounty and Grace. I

have received your missive containing news of the debate which took place among you concerning the matter of following the Sufi path without the aid of a shaykh and the arguments presented by both sides. You requested that I write to you concerning the truth at my disposal as it pertains to this matter, detailing my views on said debate and summarizing my conclusions in order that all of you might have recourse to the guidance I have to offer. Moreover, you stated your request by appealing to me in the name of God, the weightiness of which is no secret to you.¹⁰⁴

From what al-Qabbāb reveals and reiterates of the question posed, it is clear not only that this unknown inquirer holds al-Qabbāb in the highest regard, but that al-Qabbāb has immense respect and appreciation for the inquirer as well. In the preface to his reply al-Qabbāb writes,

If anyone else had addressed me in a similar fashion, I would have concluded definitively that he was mocking me and that he prided himself on his superior knowledge. However, the high regard which I have for you banishes such an interpretation from my mind and renders it preposterous. You have [so to speak,] taken one with a protuberance to be plump, and blown on embers which yield no blaze. [As al-Mutanabbi once said]: “May God grant you the ability to see things as they are, lest you count as plump one whose fat is nothing but a protuberance.”

Given my love for you and my confidence in you, my desire to do justice to our brotherly bond and my knowledge that those like you pick others up when they have fallen and conceal their brothers’ failings, I am sending you my views on the matter you have raised (for it is knowledge which is not to be spread abroad – on the contrary, it is inadequate and worthy only of being concealed). After all, it is my duty to reply to someone with such a noble standing before God and whom it would be unconscionable to neglect.¹⁰⁵

In the interests of brevity, I will offer a summary here of al-Qabbāb’s reply. His position is that if anyone wishes to follow the

Sufi path and experience spiritual states and stations – taking on the qualities which these entail, keeping watch over his thoughts and desires and overcoming impediments along the spiritual path – he must have the guidance of a shaykh in the process and must not rely solely on books, for it is a path fraught with perils. At the same time, he points out, this path is not obligatory for anyone; rather, it may be likened to the pursuit of greater profit. “And it is not characteristic of the prudent, when pursuing profit, to risk traveling a dangerous path with nothing to guide them but descriptions out of books.”¹⁰⁶

As for following the path of ascertaining how one is to relate to others and purifying one’s manners of all corruption, discerning the faults in one’s soul and treating its defects, this is a confirmed obligation which no one can afford to neglect. Hence, if you should find a guide along this path, keep his company faithfully, and if you should find none, then rely upon books. For this is an obligation which has been laid upon every one of us, and whoever occupies himself with it will, most likely, not have time to devote himself fully to anything else. al-Qabbāb states,

It astonishes me that one should devote his life to the pursuit of spiritual states and stations before requiring himself to fulfill his financial and moral obligations, and before seeking knowledge of that which everyone agrees to be his duty, namely, not to engage in any action, speech, movement or stillness before determining God’s ruling thereon...Then, having ascertained these things, one should require oneself to do what is one’s unequivocal duty and refrain from that which is forbidden in the realm of beliefs, inward states and thoughts, movements, forms of quietude, and all other states....[Such a person will] fulfill his duty to speak the truth wherever this is required, command the doing of what is good and forbid the doing of what is wrong wherever necessary, and keep watch over his bodily members at every moment, calling himself to account morning and evening.¹⁰⁷

Then, coming to his main point, al-Qabbāb states, “And if anything should distract him from a moment of his ritual prayer, he

should empty himself thereof by abandoning it, even if it equals 50,000,¹⁰⁸ as our forebears used to do.”¹⁰⁹ He then continues for several more pages, at the end of which he apologizes to his inquirer for not having addressed the issue at hand point by point as he had asked him to do. In addition, he confesses honestly, and with a peculiar, remarkable humility, to negligence in relation to both this life and the life to come, saying, “I urge people to live the truth, while I myself fail to do what it requires of me. I call others to the truth while I, of all people, am the farthest from it. For this I ask God to pardon me by His Grace.”¹¹⁰

Hence, both the question and the reply are presented without any mention of the inquirer’s identity despite his notably lofty status. Indeed, al-Qabbāb suggests in the beginning of his response that the inquirer is more knowledgeable than the one of whom he is inquiring. This being the case, one would have expected the compiler to make an effort to identify and introduce the inquirer to the extent possible; and perhaps he did so.¹¹¹

Be that as it may, I have managed to determine that the inquirer was al-Shāṭibī. This conclusion is based on the fact that in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī himself mentions the statement which I referred to above as the ‘main point’ of al-Qabbāb’s response. He writes, “Regarding what someone who seeks the afterlife ought to concern himself with, a certain shaykh of Morocco¹¹² wrote to me, saying, ‘And if anything should distract him from a moment of his ritual prayer, he should empty himself thereof by abandoning it, even if it equals 50,000, as our forebears¹¹³ used to do.’”¹¹⁴

Al-Shāṭibī replied to al-Qabbāb concerning this matter in a second letter the text of which he includes in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, mentioning that when al-Qabbāb received the reply, he wrote back to al-Shāṭibī acknowledging the soundness of his position.¹¹⁵

Al-Shāṭibī’s reply is witty and cogent.¹¹⁶ The gist of his argument is that the claim that whoever is distracted by something during his prayer is obliged to give up whatever it was that distracted him finds no support either in the principles of Islamic Law or in reality. After all, if we hold to this premise, then virtually everyone will have to renounce all their possessions and their families as well! And what

are we to say about someone who is distracted during prayer by his poverty and the fact that he has nothing? At the same time, he recognizes that those accountable before the Law must struggle to the best of their ability against whatever distracting thoughts might assail them during prayer and do whatever they can to overcome them.¹¹⁷

Based on this issue and that of avoiding disputes as an expression of piety, as well as Ibn ‘Arafah’s related response, al-Shāṭibī formulated a rule of the utmost importance and soundness, namely, that “If the application of a principle in its most inclusive sense leads to that which is inconsonant with the Law or reason, then it may not be viewed as fully sound or consistent, and must no longer be applied unconditionally.”¹¹⁸

He then states, “Adhere to this rule, for it is quite beneficial and can serve as the basis for answers to many questions pertaining to the matter of piety (*wara‘*) and points which are deemed to be obscure or ambiguous, as well as in determining which aspects of such ambiguity should, or should not, be deemed significant...”¹¹⁹

Correspondence with Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī

Another of al-Shāṭibī’s correspondences which al-Wansharīsī has included in his encyclopedic work *al-Mi‘yār* is his exchange with Ibn ‘Abbād, which likewise had to do with the matter of following the Sufi path and the degree to which it is necessary to have a shaykh to guide one in this process. Al-Wansharīsī states, “A question concerning the science of Sufism: written from Granada, Andalusia’s base, by the shaykh, scholar and realized gnostic, my master Abū Ishaq al-Shāṭibī, may God have mercy on him to the realized shaykh, righteous scholar and man of God, Abū ‘Abd Allāh, my master Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Mālik ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yahyā ibn ‘Abbād al-Nafzī al-Rundī.”¹²⁰

This time, however, al-Wansharīsī identifies the inquirer,¹²¹ honoring him with the titles of “shaykh,” “scholar,” “realized gnostic,” and “master.” He also comments on the question with the words, “A question on the science of Sufism...,” a phrase which calls for two observations. Firstly, there was actually more than a single question

and a single correspondence; rather, Ibn ‘Abbād, the question’s respondent, makes reference to two correspondences on this topic. Thus, in the beginning of his response he writes, “I have read your two missives and understood their contents. However, I will not be able to write in response to all their sections by way of either validation or invalidation, since they are quite lengthy and touch upon a wide variety of themes.”¹²²

Secondly, it appears from this statement by Ibn ‘Abbād – as it appeared earlier from what al-Qabbāb wrote in his response – that al-Shāṭibī’s correspondences were more than simply ‘questions,’ but were, in fact, lengthy treatises dealing with a number of issues and themes, and that they presented the debates which were taking place in Granada, including the arguments and points of view being put forth by both sides (one of which was represented by al-Shāṭibī, of course).

Moreover, this correspondence, which included two letters to Ibn ‘Abbād, touched on such a wide variety of issues that both respondents declined to follow up on all their contents. In fact, al-Qabbāb wrote saying, “I have declined to respond to all of its sections, confessing honestly to negligence in relation to both this life and the life to come.”¹²³

It is truly unfortunate that letters of such academic and historical importance have been lost!

* * * * *

Having concluded this brief look at certain features of al-Shāṭibī’s personality, life and interests, I shall now turn to the heart of this study, namely, al-Shāṭibī’s theory of *maqāṣid*. However, by way of introduction to a detailed study and discussion of the theory and related issues, I have devoted the section which follows to a presentation of the theory in summary form. And to this we now turn.

[II]

A Presentation of the Theory

The principle place in which al-Shāṭibī presents the theory of *maqāṣid* is Part 3 of his five-part *al-Muwāfaqāt* (or Part 2 of the four parts in which the book is printed). What I will present in this section is, basically, a synopsis of this part of *al-Muwāfaqāt*. However, I have devoted another section to a review of the extensions of the objectives theory in the remaining parts of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, as well as in al-Shāṭibī's other published writings.

My goal in this synopsis is to highlight the theory's overall features more than it is to focus on the discussions of which the book consists and related details. In addition, I do my utmost to steer a middle course between the brevity required by a summary, and the clarity and detail required by an adequate explanation. The difficulty of such a mission will be easily discerned, but I hope to have proven myself equal to the task.

In this summary I have kept commentary and discussion to a minimum lest they disturb the flow of the presentation, since discussion and commentary on al-Shāṭibī's theory will have a place of their own. Let us then turn to the 'theory of objectives' in Part 3 of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, entitled "*Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*" (The Book of Higher Objectives.)

Occasion-Based Analysis of Islamic Law

*(Ta‘līl al-Shari‘ah)*¹²⁴

Al-Shāṭibī introduces his detailed discussion of the theme of objectives with a preface which he describes as 'scholastic,' and in which he touches briefly upon the subject of analyzing Islamic Law and its rulings in terms of the occasions which gave rise to them. In this preface, al-Shāṭibī argues that "[divinely revealed] laws have all been established to preserve human beings' interests both in this life and the life to come." He notes that this is the view held by virtually all

of the Mu'talizites, as well as most later jurisprudents; in so doing, they disagree with al-Rāzī, "who claimed that neither God's rulings nor God's actions are subject to interpretation in terms of their occasions or causes."

Al-Shāṭibī then goes on to maintain that an inductive reading of Islamic Law will lead to the indubitable conclusion that the Law was laid down for no other purpose than to serve human beings' interests, and that this type of occasion-based interpretation is ongoing in regard to all details of the Law. In this context, al-Shāṭibī quotes a number of texts which contain occasion-based interpretations of the Law, including both general, inclusive interpretations and specific interpretations of some of its rulings. An example of the general type may be found in the words of God Almighty in the Qur'an, "And [thus, O Prophet,] We have sent thee as [an evidence of Our] Grace towards all the worlds" (Qur'an, 21:107), while the second type is illustrated by the words which follow the Qur'anic instructions on how to perform ritual ablutions: "God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, so that you might have cause to be grateful" (Qur'an, 5:6).

Al-Shāṭibī's Categorization of the Higher Objectives

Al-Shāṭibī divides the higher objectives of the Law into two general categories: (1) higher objectives of the Lawgiver, and (2) objectives of those accountable before the Law, in other words, human objectives. He then subdivides the objectives of the Lawgiver into four types:

- Type 1: The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing the Law
- Type 2: The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing the Law for people's understanding
- Type 3: The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing the Law as a standard of conduct
- Type 4: The Lawgiver's higher objectives in bringing human beings under the Law's jurisdiction.

As for the second category, namely, human objectives, al-Shāṭibī does not subdivide them but, rather, simply discusses them in relation to specific questions and cases.

What follows is a brief overview of the two general categories of objectives in keeping with the aforementioned categorization and order. However, I will not adhere to al-Shāṭibī's manner of ordering the questions and ideas related thereto, my purpose being to offer the clearest possible presentation of al-Shāṭibī's theory of objectives.

CATEGORY 1: THE HIGHER OBJECTIVES OF THE LAWGIVER

Type 1: The Lawgiver's Higher Objectives in Establishing the Law

Al-Shāṭibī entitles his discussion, “the Lawgiver’s higher objectives in establishing the Law.” However, when introducing his categorization of the objectives, he phrases it, “...the Lawgiver’s higher objectives in establishing the Law first and foremost.” This final phrase has special importance in clarifying what he means by this type and in distinguishing it from the other three. With this in mind, ‘Abd Allāh al-Darrāz states, “In other words, this is the aim which occupies the place of first importance such that by comparison, all other objectives are simply added detail. Moreover, this first aim is summed up in the statement that the Law was established to serve human interests in both this life and the next...”¹²⁵

Al-Shāṭibī opens his explanation of this type, or these initial objectives of the Law, with the words, “The obligations entailed by the Law are intended for the purpose of fulfilling its objectives among human beings. Moreover, these objectives fall under one of three categories: essentials, exigencies, and embellishments.” Al-Shāṭibī then proceeds to clarify what he means by each of these categories:

1. Essentials (*al-darūrāt*): These are things which are essential for the achievement of human beings’ spiritual and material well-being. If these essentials are missing, the result will be imbalance and major corruption in both this world and the next. Moreover,

to the extent that they are lacking, there will be greater or lesser corruption and disturbance in people's lives.

2. Exigencies, or needs-related interests or objectives (*al-hājiyyāt*): These are the interests which, when fulfilled, contribute to relieving hardship and difficulty and creating ease in the lives of those accountable before the Law.
3. Embellishments (*al-taḥṣīniyyāt*): These are interests which are of less importance than essentials and exigencies; however, they function to enhance and complete their fulfillment; embellishments include things such as commendable habits and customs, the observance of rules of etiquette and a high moral standard.
4. With regard to the essential objectives or interests, it will be observed from an inductive reading of the Law that they consist of the following five: religion, human life, progeny, material wealth and human reason.¹²⁶ Every religion prescribes means of preserving these five entities.

Moreover, Islamic Law undertakes to preserve essential interests, as well as others, in two complimentary ways. The first of these is by preserving their existence, that is, by legislating that which will bring them into being, then perpetuating and nurturing their existence. The second of these ways is by protecting them from annihilation, that is, by preventing that which would lead to their disappearance, destruction or neutralization, be it a presently existing reality or something which is anticipated. The preservation of religion, for example, is achieved on the side of existence through its fundamental doctrines, the primary forms of worship such as ritual prayer and zakah, etc., while its preservation on the side of non-existence is achieved through jihad, punishment for apostates, and the prohibition of innovations. Similarly, rulings having to do with customs and daily transactions contribute to preserving the remaining essentials on the side of existence, while rulings having to do with legal penalties contribute to their preservation on the side of non-existence.

The five aforementioned essential interests are viewed as the roots or foundations of all other interests. Hence, exigencies, or needs-based interests, are in the service of and complementary to the essen-

tials, just as embellishments are in the service of and complementary to, exigencies. Everything, then, revolves around the essential objectives or interests of the Law, reinforcing, completing and enhancing them.

This arrangement is the basis for some very important principles having to do with priorities, which facilitate the process of choosing which interest to give preference to over another when there is a conflict between them. According to one such principle, "Every complement or auxiliary, insofar as it is a complement, has a condition, namely, that its consideration not cancel out the foundational entity of which it serves as a complement."¹²⁷ This principle may be illustrated with reference to ritual prayer, which has certain conditions and complements such as ritual purity, facing the *qiblah*, etc. If it is impossible to fulfill one or more of these conditions, and if we nevertheless insist on their fulfillment in order for ritual prayer to be possible, then the foundation itself will be lost, and we will go without prayer. In such a situation, consideration for the complement has led to the nullification of its foundation, which is not acceptable. Therefore, in a case such as this, it is necessary to cling to the foundation, or root, even if this means forfeiting its complement or complements.

An example of the application of this principle to the realm of daily transactions is that of buying and selling, one condition for which is the absence of risk and uncertainty (*gharar*). It may be difficult or impossible to fulfill this condition in some commercial transactions, especially if we aim for a total elimination of uncertainty and risk. Hence, we are faced with a choice between nullifying such sales, which inevitably entail some degree of risk and uncertainty, and allowing them to proceed while minimizing risk and uncertainty to the greatest extent possible. Given the principle stated above, which is derived from an inductive reading of the evidence provided by the Law, the latter choice is most certainly the correct one. For the Lawgiver, Glory be to Him has caused the various interests to complement and serve one another. He has made less essential interests subordinate to the more essential ones, and less worthy of consideration. Hence, the interests served by the Law must not be

employed to cancel each other out, nor must less essential interests be allowed to cancel out more essential ones. On the contrary, they have been established in order to reinforce, fulfill and preserve each other.

It is on this basis that al-Shāṭibī formulates the fourth question relating to this type. After declaring that “the essential objectives are the foundation for exigencies and embellishments,” he fleshes out the meaning of this statement in the form of the following five rules:

1. The essentials are the foundation for exigencies and embellishments.
2. Disorder in relation to the essentials will lead to complete disorder in the latter two.¹²⁸
3. An imbalance in the realm of the exigencies and embellishments does not necessitate an imbalance in the essentials.
4. A complete imbalance in the realm of embellishments or exigencies may lead to a partial imbalance in the realm of essentials.
5. Exigencies and embellishments must be preserved for the sake of the essentials.

Al-Shāṭibī’s purpose in defining and arranging these rules is to arrive at the conclusion contained in Rule 5, which is based, in turn, on Rule 4, which states that in order to preserve the essentials, it is necessary (in general) to preserve the exigencies and embellishments as well. The reason for this is that, as al-Shāṭibī puts it, “Any nullification of that which is less fundamental entails a violation of that which is more fundamental and has the potential of leading to a disturbance therein. Hence, the less fundamental might be likened to a ‘sanctuary’ for that which is more fundamental, and ‘those who graze around the sanctuary are liable to step inside it.’ In other words whoever undermines that which is less fundamental runs the risk of undermining what is more fundamental as well. Hence, the complete nullification of those things which are viewed as luxuries or complements has the potential of nullifying the essentials to some extent as well...”¹²⁹

For the time being I will simply summarize the questions relating

to the Lawgiver's objectives of the first type. As for the remaining questions, some of them (Questions 5 and 8) will be dealt with in the section dealing with sources of benefit and harm, while others (such as Question 9) will be treated in the section entitled, "How the Lawgiver's objectives may be determined." I have thus postponed the treatment of these questions since I will be obliged to discuss them in the sections referred to here. However, the discussion devoted to them in these other places will contain detail, elucidation and commentary commensurate with their importance.

Type 2: The Lawgiver's Higher Objectives in Establishing the Law for People's Understanding

Of the five types of objectives listed by al-Shāṭibī, this one receives the briefest treatment; thus, it contains only five questions, which may in turn be condensed into two. Al-Shāṭibī introduces these two questions in the following phrases: (1) "This blessed Law is in the Arabic language..."¹³⁰ and (2) "this blessed Law [was revealed to an] unlettered [people]..."¹³¹

The connection between these two questions and *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* is that a sound understanding of the Law and its objectives is only possible based on answers to these two questions (or, recognition of these two facts). The importance of the first lies in the fact that "the Qur'an was revealed in the Arabic tongue. Hence, whoever wishes to understand it must do so by means of the Arabic language. There is no other way in which to pursue such understanding." Secondly, the Law may be described as 'unlettered' because the people to whom it was revealed were unlettered, and as such, it has a greater capacity to take their interests into consideration. "In other words, the fact that the Law was revealed in a manner consistent with the condition of those to whom it was revealed renders it more capable of safeguarding the interests for the sake of which the All-Wise Lawgiver established it."¹³²

However, although these five questions contain principles which are valuable and necessary for understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah and achieving their objectives, I do not consider this to be the most appropriate place to discuss them. In fact, I do not fully agree

with al-Shātibī's decision to treat them as part of the Lawgiver's objectives. Rather, I view them as bases for understanding the Lawgiver's objectives, and in fact, in his book *al-Itiṣām*, he refers to them as "the tools by means of which the objectives may be understood."¹³³ For this reason, then, I have postponed their presentation and clarification to Chapter Three, Section Three, where I discuss the means by which the objectives are to be understood.

Type 3: The Lawgiver's Higher Objectives in Establishing the Law as a Standard of Conduct

Under this heading al-Shātibī discusses the objectives of the Lawgiver in what He requires of those answerable before the Law, as well as distinctions between what the Lawgiver does and does not intend in His requirements of human beings. The discussion of this type is distributed among twelve different questions, half the volume of which is taken up by Question 7. The topics discussed in the context of this type may be grouped under the following two topics: (1) Requiring that which is beyond human capacity, and (2) Requiring that which involves hardship. Requirements which fall under the first heading are agreed upon unanimously to be excluded from Islamic Law; consequently, al-Shātibī spends little time on them. Instead, his discussion focuses upon ambiguous cases, concerning which it is unclear whether they may be considered to be within human capacity.

With regard to legal requirements, al-Shātibī states, "If it appears at first that there is an intention to require that which falls beyond the realm of human capacity, this calls for an investigation of its antecedents, outcomes and associated conditions or circumstances." If, for example, the Lawgiver requires believers to love one another, then what is actually intended by the requirement is those prior causes which lead to love's emergence, as well as attendant and subsequent circumstances, conditions, or actions which reinforce and establish such love once it has come into existence. What is intended by the requirement is not the emergence of the love itself, since this is beyond human capacity to control. And the same goes for any similar requirement.

In the case of ambiguous actions (i.e., those concerning which it is not known whether they are required, or whether they fall into the category of that which is beyond human capacity, in which case the requirement actually applies to conditions and/or actions which precede or follow the action in question), these are represented most prominently by inward qualities such as arrogance, envy, worldliness, cowardice, forbearance, patience, and courage. Al-Shāṭibī devotes an in-depth, detailed discussion to these matters in the context of presenting Questions 3 and 4. At the same time, however, and despite its great value, this discussion is peripheral to the subject of objectives; hence, as though he were aware of this fact, al-Shāṭibī states after having raised a difficulty relating to this theme, “This could be discussed at greater length; however, there is no need to do so here.”¹³⁴

As for the second topic, namely, requiring that which involves hardship, it is the most central theme relating to this type of objectives. For while the matter of requiring that which is beyond human capacity is clear and virtually agreed upon by all, the questions relating to hardship in what is required by the Law are fraught with obscurity, ambiguity and confusion.

It is thus a topic of the utmost importance; yet despite its difficulty, al-Shāṭibī demonstrates mastery in handling its challenges and clarifying related issues. After paving the way for his discussion by defining hardship and mentioning its various types and degrees, he sets forth the rulings and objectives of the Lawgiver as they relate to hardship. First he states, “The Lawgiver’s intention in the requirements He makes is not to impose hardship and suffering thereby.”¹³⁵ Evidence of this may be seen in the numerous texts which renounce hardship and which state explicitly that (what the Lawgiver intends for us is) ease and compassion in the Law’s rulings and objectives. This stance is also supported by the many allowances mentioned in connection with the Laws’ requirements. For if the Lawgiver had intended to impose hardship, He would not have instituted such allowances. Moreover, given all the evidence adduced here, this truth is the subject of unanimous agreement.

Then, in the beginning of his discussion of Question 7 – the

longest under this heading – al-Shāṭibī affirms that “The Lawgiver intends to require that which involves some degree of difficulty and hardship. However, it is generally not termed ‘hardship’ any more than we would term ‘hardship’ seeking to earn one’s means of subsistence by practicing a profession or a trade. After all, such an activity is both possible and widespread, and the difficulty which it entails is generally not sufficient to prevent people from working; on the contrary, prudent folk and those who practice professions consider someone who leaves off such a pursuit to be lazy and will condemn him for doing so. “The same, then,” states al-Shāṭibī, “applies in the realm of the requirements of the Law.”

Moreover, despite the fact that most actions required by the Law do entail some degree of hardship, and although the Lawgiver intends to impose this type of obligation, it would not be true to say that He intends to impose these obligations for the sake of the hardship they involve. There is no case in which the Lawgiver intends the hardship *per se*; rather, He intends “the benefits which accrue to human beings through the fulfillment of these obligations.”

Another principle which grows out of the foregoing is that “we should not seek out hardship in fulfilling what is required of us in view of the great reward which we hope to attain in this way. Rather, we should seek the action which carries a great reward ... insofar as it is a [virtuous] action.” Consequently, it is unacceptable to seek out hardship for itself, since it is contrary to the ease which the Lawgiver is known for a certainty to intend for us. Moreover, the more unusual and severe the hardship, the more unacceptable it is to seek it out, and the more contrary such a pursuit is to the Lawgiver’s intent, “for God has not established self-torment as a means of drawing near to Him or attaining to His presence.” This, of course, applies to situations in which the person concerned seeks out the hardship of his own accord. If, on the other hand, the hardship is simply concomitant to the action he is performing, then it is acceptable to enter into it, and the ruling on the hardship is the same as the ruling on the action, as, for example, in the case of the hardship entailed in jihad.

Given the fact that the context requires a focused discussion of the

Law's objective to alleviate hardship – except in connection with those actions in which hardship is unavoidable – al-Shāṭibī touches in one part of his discussion of Question 7 on the cause underlying the Law's keen concern to eliminate hardship. He concludes that the reason for this concern consists of two aspects: "The first aspect is the fear that people will develop an aversion to worship and the obligations imposed by the Law and, as a consequence, abandon the path, or that the hardships involved in fulfilling one's obligations before the Law will cause harm to the individual's body, mind, possessions or overall condition. As for the second aspect, it is the fear that when life's various tasks and duties – such as those involved in caring for one's wife and children, not to mention other obligations which arise along the way – compete for a person's time and attention, he will become neglectful [of his obligations toward his Maker]. In other words, one's involvement in certain tasks might become such a distraction from one's obligations toward God that one abandons them altogether. Or one might go to such extremes in seeking to do justice to both aspects of one's life that one eventually abandons both pursuits."

Hence, if the Lawgiver's objective is to alleviate the hardships and difficulties entailed by what He requires of us, then the objective underlying this objective, as it were, is to ensure that we persevere in doing good and maintain balance in fulfilling our duties and obligations without going to excess in one aspect of our lives and being neglectful in another. Al-Shāṭibī engages in a prolonged, orderly, clearly reasoned discussion of these causes, in the course of which he eliminates ambiguities and rebuts hypothetical objections by reliance upon definitive texts relevant to the topic at hand.

In Question 8, al-Shāṭibī moves on to a discussion of the ruling on another type of hardship, namely, the hardship involved in resisting one's own desires and whims. He states, "Resisting one's personal whims and desires is an arduous task, as it is difficult for the soul to part with them..." However, he then concludes that Islamic Law takes no account of this type of hardship, since, "in establishing the Law, the Lawgiver's higher objective was to deliver human beings from following their own desires in order that they might be servants

to Him alone. Hence, resisting one's desires and whims, arduous though it is, is not included among the types of hardship which are recognized in the realm of our legal obligations."

In his discussion of Question 11, al-Shāṭibī details the distinction between types of hardship which the Lawgiver intends to alleviate, and those which He intends neither to alleviate nor to bring about. The determining factor in this regard is described by al-Shāṭibī as follows:

...If the hardship being endured by the individual is so extreme that it undermines his or her spiritual integrity or material well-being, then the Law's objective is to eliminate it, other things being equal... If, however, the hardship being endured is not extreme but, rather, is comparable to that which attends other ordinary tasks of a similar nature, then, although it is not the Lawgiver's objective as such for such hardship to occur, neither is it His aim to eliminate it. After all, if it were the Lawgiver's intent to eliminate the hardship, it would not be possible to maintain presently existing religious obligations, since all tasks, be they ordinary or otherwise, require commensurate degrees of effort and accountability.

Al-Shāṭibī then draws attention to an important point of relevance, namely, that the determination of which types of hardship do and do not merit alleviation is based on: (1) the tasks that require them, and (2) the degree of such tasks' urgency and importance. Thus, for example, we do not measure the hardship entailed by the two *rak'ahs* which one performs in the mid-morning prayer (which is voluntary) by the same standards by which we would measure the hardship entailed by the dawn prayer (which is one of the most emphatically stressed obligatory prayers of the day). Nor would we measure the hardship entailed by either of these prayers (which is minor) by the same standards which we would apply to the hardship required by the major pilgrimage to Makkah; nor would this hardship be compared to that entailed by jihad. For the hardship entailed by prayer and fasting might, by comparison with that required by the pilgrimage, seem to be nothing at all, while the hardships involved in

the pilgrimage might seem to be nothing compared with those involved in jihad. Hence, the appraisal of hardship is a relative matter which differs based on the nature of the action in question, how necessary it is, and the benefit it brings, as well as the situation and condition of the person performing the action. Based on all such considerations taken together, a decision may be made as to whether allowances should be granted or not.

In conclusion to his treatment of hardship and ease, al-Shāṭibī comes to Question 12, a manifestation of his peculiar genius and his unsurpassed grasp of Islamic Law and its content. He states here that legislation in Islam was revealed, originally, “on the path of greatest moderation, and that which steers a middle course between the two extremes¹³⁶ in unwavering measure...” It is in this form that we find most of the obligations required by the Law, such as the obligations relating to ritual prayer, fasting and zakah, as well as the prohibition of most of that which is forbidden, all of which represents a balance suited to the majority of human beings.

However, notes al-Shāṭibī, if the legislation in question has been laid down in order to counter some sort of distortion in human beings’ attitudes or actions, then it will be characterized by a ‘slant’ in the opposite direction to that of the distortion. Thus, for example, if people are tending in the direction of decadence, corruption and slavery to their whims and lusts, then the legislation will be slanted in the direction of forcible prevention and austerity in order to restore people to moderation. If, on the other hand, people are tending toward such excess and immoderation in their religion that they go to extremes in asceticism and the pursuit of afflictions for their own sake, then the legislation will be slanted in the direction of tolerance, alleviation, the provision of allowances, and encouraging people to enjoy life’s pleasures and blessings.

Al-Shāṭibī articulates this principle with consummate eloquence, saying,

If you contemplate Islamic Law as a whole, you will find that it tends in the direction of moderation. Hence, if you observe a tendency toward one or another extreme, this is because it is countering some present or

anticipated tendency toward the opposite extreme. The extreme of austerity – and, in general, anything that would fall within the realm of threat, intimidation and rebuke – is intended to confront those who are tending toward laxness and decadence in the religion. Conversely, the extreme of lenience or mitigation – and, generally, anything which falls under the rubric of encouragement, enticement and allowances – is intended to respond to those who tend in the direction of severity and inflexibility. In all other situations, however, you will find it to be palpably moderate. This is the foundation to which the Law always returns and the stronghold in which it takes refuge.

Type 4: The Lawgiver's Higher Objectives in Bringing Human Beings under the Law's Jurisdiction

Al-Shāṭibī's discussion of this theme is the longest of all those included under the heading 'the higher objectives of the Lawgiver.' In fact, it nearly equals in length the discussions of all three previous types together perhaps due to al-Shāṭibī's prolix digressions which, though they take him some distance from the topic at hand, do bear some connection to this type in particular. What I mean by digressions are, in particular, Questions 9 to 16. The most significant thing which connects the discussions of these eight questions to the theme of 'bringing human beings under the Law's jurisdiction' is the premise that nothing and no one falls outside the Law's jurisdiction. People of all classes and walks of life, events both commonplace and extraordinary, states inward and outward, must all be brought into subjection to the rulings of the Law.

In the beginning of his discussion of Question 9, al-Shāṭibī states, "In relation to human beings, Islamic Law is an all-inclusive universal. In other words, none of its rulings is addressed exclusively to some but not others, and no one whatsoever can escape coming within its jurisdiction." Then, as he opens his discussion of Question 12 he adds, "Just as the Law encompasses all human beings and applies to all of their varied states, it likewise encompasses the worlds of both the seen and the unseen with respect to every human being. Hence, we must submit to its authority everything which we experience, both inwardly and outwardly."

It might also be noted that although Questions 17, 18 and 19 are closely related to the theme of the Lawgiver's higher objectives in bringing human beings in subjection to the Law, they would nevertheless appear to be more intimately connected to others of the book's themes, and would have been more appropriately placed elsewhere. Question 17, for example, has to do with sources of benefit and harm and the manner in which we are to weigh them against each other, a theme the discussion of which I have postponed due to its numerous ramifications. As for Questions 18 and 19, they deal with the theme of *ta'lil al-Shari'ah*, or interpreting the Law in terms of the occasions which gave rise to it. This is a theme which al-Shāṭibī touches upon briefly in the introduction, as we saw earlier, and which I have promised to treat in detail later in this book.

These ten questions make up half the total number of questions included in the discussion of this type. It is the ten remaining questions, however, which go to the heart of the matter, and to these we now turn. As we have seen, al-Shāṭibī entitles this fourth category of objectives, 'bringing human beings under the Law's jurisdiction.' As he opens his discussion of Question 1, however, he changes the wording in order to clarify what he means more fully, referring to it as, "the rightful intent behind the establishment of the Law..." which invites us to compare this with the name he assigned to the first type, namely, 'the Lawgiver's intent in establishing the Law.' 'Abd Allāh has drawn attention to the similarity between these two phrases and the question it raises concerning the relationship and differences between Types 1 and 4. He states,

Type 1 refers to the establishment of a system which is capable of bringing happiness in both this world and the next to those who adhere to it, while Type 4 refers to the fact that the Lawgiver calls upon His servants to place themselves in subjection to this system, and not to their whims and desires.¹³⁷

The distinction between the two types becomes clear through an examination of the discussions of each. However, the words with which al-Shāṭibī opens each of them are, in and of themselves,

sufficient to make the difference clear. The words with which he opens his discussion of Type 1 were quoted earlier; as regards the remainder of his introduction to this type, it reads, "The rightful objective behind the establishment of the Law is to deliver human beings from subjection to their whims and desires in order that they might be servants of God by their own free choice just as they are, already, His servants by necessity." Then, after citing a number of texts which censure (subjection to one's) whims and caprices and those who live in such subjection, he continues, "All of this makes it clear that the Lawgiver's higher objective is to enable human beings to abandon their subservience to their desires and whims and to enter fully into adoring submission to their Master."

As is his custom in determining objectives, al-Shāṭibī marshals such cogent textual and rational evidence and refutes actual or hypothetical objections with such effectiveness that his conclusion is virtually uncontested. And in this manner he demonstrates that it is the Lawgiver's objective to deliver human beings from the tyranny of their worldly desires and bring them under the authority of the Law and its rulings. This, moreover, is not in conflict with what was determined in his discussion of Type 1 to the effect that it is the Lawgiver's higher objective to protect human beings' interests, since their best interests, though they may be achieved to some extent by their submitting to their own desires, can only be achieved fully through the rulings of the Law, and this can only occur by one's being liberated from worldly desires and whims and seeking to achieve one's true interests in accordance with the dictates of the Lawgiver. Al-Shāṭibī then goes on to say,

Once this has been determined, it becomes the basis for a number of rules. The first of these is that every action which is based on the mere fulfillment of one's own desires and without regard for what God has commanded, prohibited, or left open to human choice, is invalid without exception. The reason for this is that for every action, there must be a person, a force, a law or the like which moves one to action. Hence, if the intention to obey the Lawgiver plays no role in one's performance of a given action, then it is nothing but a response to one's desires and

lusts, and any action which meets this description is, without exception, unacceptable. By the same token, it may be said that every action which is a response to what God has commanded, prohibited, or left open to human choice is acceptable and right. If, on the other hand, an action represents a mixture of the two – in other words, if it is in part a response to a divine command and in part a response to one's own desires – then the ruling on it will vary accordingly, being based on whatever of the two motives is predominant and prior...

A second rule which al-Shāṭibī derives from the aforementioned reasoning is that “Living on the basis of one's desires and whims leads to that which is blameworthy even if it should take the form of that which is praiseworthy...” In other words, continuously satisfying one's own personal desires, even if one does so by performing deeds which are permissible and charitable, has the potential of stirring up selfish inclinations and causing one to grow accustomed to doing things for the sake of one's own self-satisfaction and without adhering to the limits set by the Law. When this occurs, one's desires may lead one to violate the Law's rulings and enter the realm of the prohibited.

This, then, is a summary of the first, and basic, question discussed under the heading of this type and its various subtopics. As for the five subsequent questions – that is, Questions 2 through 6 – they are extensions of the first and contain more detailed discussions of its themes. Al-Shāṭibī begins these by dividing legal objectives into two categories, namely, primary objectives (*maqāṣid aṣliyyah*), and secondary objectives (*maqāṣid taba‘iyyah*). Of the first category he states, “Primary objectives are those in regard to which there is no consideration for human enjoyment or inclinations; these are represented by the essentials which are recognized in every religion.” The essentials which are recognized in every religion are, as we have seen, religion, human life, the capacity for human reasoning, progeny, and material wealth and possessions. The reason al-Shāṭibī holds that there is no consideration for human enjoyment or inclinations in relation to these essentials is that human beings are under obligation to preserve them whether they want to or not. Indeed, if they do not,

they will be obliged to do so, and will be penalized both in this life and the next for allowing them to be squandered. Consequently, preservation of the essentials is not based on human desire, choice or inclination. This, then, is what it means for human enjoyment and inclinations not to be given any consideration in relation to the category of primary objectives.

Al-Shāṭibī continues, “As for the secondary objectives, they are those in relation to which consideration is given to human enjoyment and inclinations. In relation to secondary objectives, human beings are able to act in accordance with their natural inclination to satisfy their desires, experience enjoyment through licit activities, and meet their needs.” These secondary objectives find expression in the various forms of licit enjoyment, and even through seeking out pleasure and ease within the limits set forth by the Law.¹³⁸

It is clear that, in addition to what these secondary objectives entail by way of human enjoyment and gratification, they may be considered to be “in the service of, and complementary to, the primary objectives.” It may also be said that although, to begin with, the primary objectives are imposed upon human beings without regard for whether they accept them or reject them, they nevertheless lead to outcomes which entail enjoyment and benefits.

After explaining the interconnectedness and complementarity of the primary and secondary objectives, al-Shāṭibī states, “It may happen that something which holds out no enjoyment or pleasure for human beings on the level of primary objectives does provide these on the level of the Lawgiver’s secondary objectives. And conversely, something which holds out enjoyment and pleasure for human beings on the level of primary objectives may hold out nothing of the sort on the level of secondary objectives.” An example of what al-Shāṭibī is saying here is that when someone strives to preserve his life and that of his progeny – both of which are among the primary objectives in relation to which no consideration is given to human enjoyment or inclinations – he experiences various types of pleasure and enjoyment which may be viewed as among the Lawgiver’s secondary objectives.

In fact, even the various forms of worship – which, of all the obli-

gations required of us under the Law, are the furthest from considerations of human enjoyment or inclinations – serve to realize not only the primary aim for which they were established but, in addition, secondary benefits which fall within the category of human enjoyment and fulfillment, such as other people's respect and confidence.

At the same time, all of the various enjoyments and pleasures which the Lawgiver has permitted are included within the preservation of the essentials, that is, the primary objectives. Thus al-Shātibī states, "Partaking of tasty cuisine, wearing fine clothing, riding swift steeds and wedding beautiful women may all guarantee the satisfaction of needs and maintenance of life. Yet as we have seen, the preservation of life, insofar as it is an essential, is something in relation to which no consideration is given to human enjoyment or inclinations." Yet despite the fact that action in accordance with the primary objectives achieves secondary objectives or benefits, while acting in accordance with secondary objectives serves primary objectives, it is nevertheless preferable for action to be in accordance with the primary objectives and for their sake. There are several reasons for this preference, which may be summarized as follows:¹³⁹

1. Because this is more in keeping with what was stated at the beginning of the discussion of this type, namely, that the Lawgiver's intention in revealing legislation is to wean human beings away from subservience to their desires and whims.
2. Because observance of the primary objectives is more conducive to sincere action and more likely to render one's action a form of worship. In addition, it is less likely to be influenced by human desires which would prevent one's action from being motivated solely by a spirit of submission and service to God.
3. Because basing one's actions on the primary objectives causes them to become expressions of worship, be they the usual forms of worship or ordinary activities.
4. Because on closer examination, one will see that the primary objectives, being broader and more significant, automatically

include within themselves the fulfillment of secondary objectives as well.

5. Because action which is performed for the sake of primary objectives renders one's obedience greater, whereas the violation of these objectives causes one's disobedience to be greater. Moreover, out of this arises another principle, namely, that if one examines the major acts of obedience, one finds that they grow out of consideration for primary objectives and that, conversely, if one contemplates the major sins, one will find them to be violations of these objectives.¹⁴⁰
6. Because actions performed in pursuit of the primary objectives tend to be obligatory (given that the primary objectives involve the preservation of that which is essential in the religion), and performing actions which are obligatory is better than performing other types of actions.

These considerations in favor of acting in pursuit of the primary objectives, as important as they are, do not negate the legitimacy of acting in pursuit of secondary objectives, including the desire to pursue enjoyment, material comfort and the like. At the same time, however, one's pursuit of secondary objectives should be accompanied, if even secondarily, by the intent to fulfill the primary objectives. Moreover, if, by contrast, one's action is merely to fulfill one's own desires and satisfy one's whims, then it is of no value and merits no reward with God.

At this point – that is, in his discussion of Question 6 – al-Shāṭibī is drawn into a lengthy digression of great depth and precision in which he deals with matters pertaining to sincerity and ‘idolatry’ (*tashrīk*) in one’s actions, both acts of worship and everyday habits. It is a helpful discussion in which he exhibits a powerful philosophical bent as well as stamina for high-level academic dialogue, particularly when he touches upon the difference between al-Ghazālī’s view of sincerity, characterized as it is by Sufi austerity, and that of his disciple Ibn al-‘Arabī, who exhibits the painstaking precision of the jurisprudent.

Although it would be impossible for me to summarize the entire question with all of its various ramifications,¹⁴¹ I can nevertheless at least present one of the most significant conclusions reached by al-Shāṭibī following a lengthy series of introductory discussions. After presenting subtle arguments on the basis of which he favors Ibn al-‘Arabī’s view over al-Ghazālī’s, he declares,

It is not impossible for personal motivations which are private to the individual¹⁴² to be present in the performance of acts of worship, although there can be no doubt that it is preferable for the intention to engage in worship to be kept separate from worldly motivations. Consequently, if the intention to seek some worldly interest takes predominance over the intention to engage in worship, the ruling on the action concerned will apply to whichever motivation is predominant, and the act of worship will be given no weight. If, on the other hand, the intention to engage in worship is predominant, the ruling will vary accordingly...

It now remains for us to discuss Questions 7 and 8. As for Question 7, al-Shāṭibī devotes it to a discussion of whether it is acceptable for one person to act as another’s proxy or representative in any given act. The question of proxyhood (*niyābah*) goes to the heart of the theme of the Lawgiver’s objective in bringing human beings under the Law’s jurisdiction. In actions which fall in the category of transactions, such as concluding contracts, carrying out and dissolving contractual agreements, fulfilling financial obligations, etc., the Law permits one person to act as another’s proxy “because the wise purpose for the sake of which the person is required to perform the action will still be fulfilled if someone else carries it out.” Hence, the validity of one person’s serving as another’s proxy hinges on whether the wise purpose, or aim, of the action in question may be fulfilled in this way. So long as this purpose is fulfilled by the proxy’s action, the proxyhood is valid, but if the fulfillment of said purpose is dependent on the action of the person originally held accountable for it, it will not be valid.

It is on this basis that al-Shāṭibī declares proxyhood in connection

with acts of worship to be invalid. He states, “In respect to these [i.e., acts of worship], no one may act on anyone else’s behalf, and no one else will be of any benefit to the individual concerned.” Moreover, he considers this principle to be definitive based on both textual and rational evidence. As for the textual evidence, it includes a good number of Qur’anic verses, such as God Almighty’s declaration, “And no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another’s burden; and if one weighed down by his load calls upon [another] to help him carry it, nothing thereof may be carried [by that other], even if it be one’s near of kin....and [know that] whoever grows in purity, attains to purity but for the good of his own self, and [that] with God is all journeys’ end” (35:18).

As for al-Shāṭibī’s rational evidence, it consists, firstly, of an appeal to the objectives of the Law. He states,

The aim behind the various acts of worship is to instill an attitude of reverence for God, the habit of turning to Him, humble subservience to Him, submission to His rule, and edification of the heart through remembrance of Him, in order that the servant might be present with God in both body and mind, constantly aware of Him, and that he might strive to please Him and to do whatever he can to draw near to Him. Proxyhood, however, is inimical to this aim and works against it...

Al-Shāṭibī then proceeds, as is his custom, to cite the possible objections to his position,¹⁴³ the most important of which are based on Prophetic hadiths which indicate the validity of proxyhood in relation to the pilgrimage to Makkah and fasting. Following a thorough discussion of the use of these hadiths as evidence in favor of proxyhood, al-Shāṭibī concludes by saying, “These hadiths, in addition to being few in number, stand in opposition to an established, definitive principle of Islamic Law. Moreover, it has been determined that any hadith which has been related by a single person and passed down by a single chain of narrators is not to be applied if it is opposed by a definitive principle; this rule was formulated by Mālik ibn Anas and Abū Ḥanīfah. This is the point of the matter, and this

is what is intended by it..."

In his discussion of Question 8, al-Shāṭibī clarifies another of the Lawgiver's objectives in bringing human beings under the Law's jurisdiction. He states, "One of the Lawgiver's objectives in requiring certain actions of us is to encourage us to persevere in them. The evidence for this is clear. God praises those who are constant in prayer, for example. In addition, we have the Prophetic hadith which states, 'Actions most precious to God are those which are performed with the greatest diligence and perseverance, insignificant though they may be,' as well as other texts of similar import." Moreover, in order to enable us to persevere in the actions which are pleasing to Him, "The requirements made of us under the Law have been established in moderation, hardship has been eliminated, and overstrictness has been prohibited," a topic which was discussed earlier in the section dealing with hardship.

One last observation I would like to make on the questions relating to this category of objectives, which is the last of the objectives of the Lawgiver, is that, as will be seen in what follows, certain questions pertaining to the higher objectives of the Lawgiver¹⁴⁴ bear a resemblance to, and serve to pave the way for, those relating to the second category of objectives, namely, human objectives, or the objectives of those answerable before the Law.

CATEGORY 2: HUMAN OBJECTIVES

In his treatment of the objectives of the Law, al-Shāṭibī likewise touches upon the objectives of human beings, which is another manifestation of his profound understanding and mastery of the theme with which he is dealing. After all, if no attention is given to the objectives of those who are accountable before the Law, then the objectives of the Lawgiver will be no more than ink on paper, or an idea in scholars' heads. Hence, there is a need to explicate the matter of human objectives and how they are related, both positively and negatively, to the objectives of the Lawgiver. And this is what our imam has done in his discussion of this second category of objectives.

This section, which consists of twelve questions, likewise contains a number of digressions from the topic at hand, which can be seen particularly in Questions 6, 7 and 9. Be that as it may, Question 1 serves as a type of preface to the principles or rules which follow. By way of reminder and introduction, al-Shāṭibī affirms an intuitive religious truth, namely, that “actions are inseparable from intentions, and objectives are to be taken in consideration when judging behavior, whether in the realm of worship or mundane transactions and activities.” The actor’s intention in doing what he does determines whether it is valid or invalid, an act of worship or an act of hypocrisy, obligatory or voluntary; indeed, it determines whether it is an act of faith or an act of unbelief, such as the difference between prostrating to God or prostrating to some other entity. Al-Shāṭibī adds, “If an action is associated with its intention, then action-based rulings (*al-aḥkām al-taklīfiyyah*) will apply to it, whereas if it is stripped of its intention, nothing applies to it, as in the case of actions performed by those individuals who are asleep, unconscious and insane.”

Following this introduction, al-Shāṭibī proceeds to the heart of his topic in Questions 2 and 3. He states:

1. “The Lawgiver’s aim for human beings is for their intention in what they do to be in agreement with His intention in laying down legislation.” Since the Law, as we have seen, was established to serve human interests, then what is required of human beings is to conduct themselves in accordance with this aim. “As we have seen, the Lawgiver’s objective is to preserve the essentials and what follows from them by way of exigencies and embellishments, and this is precisely what human beings are held accountable for. Hence, it is only reasonable that they should intend to preserve these things, since actions are inseparable from intentions...” Moreover, given that human beings are God’s vicegerents on earth over themselves, their families, their wealth, and everything which has been placed at their disposal, “they are required to stand in the stead of the One who appointed them to fulfill this role, putting into effect His rulings and intentions.”

2. The reverse side of the same question may be stated as follows:

“Whoever seeks, through the obligations imposed by the Law, to achieve objectives other than those for which the Law was laid down, has violated the Law, and the action of whoever violates the Law, insofar as it is a violation, is invalid.” Although it is required of human beings, generally speaking, to conform their intention in what they do to what the Lawgiver intended in legislating, most people may not know precisely what the Lawgiver’s intentions are in many of His rulings and requirements. Thus, how are they to ensure that their intention in every act they perform is in conformity with that of the Lawgiver?

The answer to this question may be found in Question 8, where al-Shāṭibī lays three choices before the individual: (1) He may aim in his action to achieve what he understands to be the Lawgiver’s intention therein, yet without neglecting the intention to worship and express reverence as well lest he be unmindful of God, and lest he omit those aspects of the divine intention of which he may be ignorant. (2) He may aim in his action to achieve whatever the Lawgiver’s intention in such action happens to be without further specification; this is more inclusive and more perfect than the first choice. (3) He may intend simply to obey God’s command and submit to His precepts, which is even more inclusive and perfect. In all three cases, however, the individual will be in conformity with the Lawgiver’s aim and not be in danger of violating it.

* * * * *

As for the remaining questions,¹⁴⁵ they consist of applied principles and applications of what has already been presented. Question 4 includes a listing of cases reflecting conformity or lack thereof between the individual and the Lawgiver and the ruling on each case. The following are the six cases listed:

Case 1:¹⁴⁶ The individual is in conformity with the Lawgiver in both intention and action, in which case there is no doubt as to the validity of the action.

Case 2: The individual is in violation of the Lawgiver in both intention and action, in which case there is no doubt as to the invalidity of the action.

Case 3: The individual is in conformity with the Lawgiver in action, but not in intention; however, he is not aware that what he has done is in conformity with the Lawgiver's intention. In such a case, the person is guilty toward God due to his ill intent, but not guilty toward other human beings due to his not having caused them harm or deprived them of benefit.

Case 4: It is similar to the former case; however, in this case the person realizes that his action is in conformity with the objectives of the Lawgiver, as a result of which his guilt toward God is even greater than in the former case since he is engaged in hypocrisy and is manipulating God's rulings for his own ends.

Case 5: The individual is in violation of the Lawgiver's objectives in action but not in intention; moreover, he is aware of the fact that his action is in violation of the Lawgiver's objectives. The person in such a situation generally has his own (positive) interpretation of what he has done and is banking on his good intentions. This case is exemplified by those who have originated innovations in the religion, (and concerning whom al-Shātibī concludes "that all innovations are blameworthy given the overall evidence to indicate this.")

Case 6: This is similar to Case 5 except that the person concerned does not realize that his action is in violation of the Lawgiver's objectives. There are two points of view on this type of case: (1) The first point of view focuses on the fact that the person's intention is in conformity with that of the Lawgiver, since "actions are inseparable from intentions," whereas his action's violation of the Lawgiver's objectives is not deliberate or something of which he is aware. (2) The second point of view focuses on the fact that the person's action is in violation of the Lawgiver's objectives; as a result, his intention does not achieve these objectives, since they are not fulfilled by mere intentions, but by intention and action together. Therefore, al-Shātibī states that, "this type of situation is rather unclear and is

problematic in the Shari‘ah.’’ After examining the issue at length, he indicates a preference for taking both points of view into consideration such that both the conformity of the person’s intention to the Lawgiver’s objectives and their violation through his action will have an impact on the ruling to be issued on the action and its consequences.¹⁴⁷

As for Question 5, it includes other, more detailed rules on the basis of which al-Shāfi‘ī defines the various aspects of conflict, or lack thereof, between what is beneficial or harmful to a given individual, and what is beneficial or harmful to others, bearing in mind the presence or absence of intention. This question might thus be referred to as the law of incompatibility and preference among people’s interests. In what follows al-Shāfi‘ī presents to us eight cases which represent the various types of conflict among people’s interests, after which he presents the various cases in greater detail, derives rules therefrom, and specifies their determining factors:

Achieving benefit for oneself or protecting oneself from harm, if it is permissible in a given situation, may take one of two forms. In the first form, it results in no harm to others, and in the second, it does result in harm to others. This second form – that is, that which results in harm to others – may likewise take one of two forms: (1) The person seeking to benefit himself or protect himself from harm intends to cause harm to someone else, as in the case of someone who lowers the prices of his merchandise in order to make a living with the intention of hurting others, and (2) Another person in the same situation does not intend to harm anyone. This latter situation, similarly, may take one of two forms: In the first, the harm inflicted is collective, as in cases involving the importation of commodities and sales made by city-dwellers to Bedouins, or as when someone refuses to sell his house or land even though others have been obliged to [seek to purchase the land in order to build] a mosque or the like. In the second, the harm inflicted is on the individual level. Such individual harm may likewise be one of two types: The first type is when harm is inflicted on an individual by his being prevented from seeking benefit or avoiding harm, as when some-

one acts to protect himself from some harm which he knows will thereby befall another, or when one person manages to buy food before someone else, knowing that if he obtains the food, someone else will be deprived thereof, and that if he is deprived of it, he himself will suffer harm. As for the second type,¹⁴⁸ it is when no harm comes to anyone as a result of such a situation. This type, moreover, might take one of three forms: (1) That which will lead to harm with an ‘ordinary degree of certainty,’¹⁴⁹ such as digging a well behind one’s back door in the dark such that whoever tries to come in is certain to fall into it. (2) That which would rarely lead to harm, such as digging a well in some location where no one would be likely to fall into it, eating foods which generally cause no one any harm, and the like. (3) That which frequently leads to harm, either: (a) most of the time, such as selling arms to those engaged in war, selling grapes to a wine manufacturer, selling something which could be used fraudulently to those prone to fraud, etc., or (b) often, but not most of the time, such as sales on credit.

Al-Shātibī concludes this section by touching upon the topic of *hiyal*, or legal artifices, the intention behind which is generally to nullify legal rulings, transform them into other rulings, or to evade their consequences. Al-Shātibī deals with this topic in the final three questions. In Question 10 he prefacing his discussion of legal artifices by defining them. In Question 11, he states that “legal artifices in religion, according to the aforementioned definition, are illegitimate for the most part.”¹⁵⁰ He then cites numerous Qur’anic verses and hadiths the overall import of which is that legal artifices are invalid and prohibited, adding that “This is the view of the majority of the Companions and their successors.”

As for the second question, it goes to the heart of the matter in that it draws a connection between legal artifices and the rulings thereon and the objectives of the Lawgiver. As al-Shātibī puts it, “Actions performed in accordance with the Law are not intended for their own sake, put for the sake of other objectives. These objectives constitute the meanings of such actions and the interests for the sake of which they are required by the Law. Hence, whoever performs such actions with some other intent¹⁵¹ is not conducting himself in

a legitimate manner."

On this basis we say that the higher objective behind the legal requirement of zakah, for example, is to overcome the vice of niggardliness and greed, to help the unfortunate and to rescue souls who are in danger of annihilation. Hence, if toward the end of the year, someone gives his money away as a means of avoiding having to pay zakah on it, and if, during the following year, or before this, he takes it back, this action serves to reinforce and perpetuate niggardliness and greed, and is thus the very antithesis of helping the unfortunate. It goes without saying that the form taken by this person's gift of money is not what is upheld by the Law, since a gift is intended to be a form of aid and charity to the person to whom it is given and a means of expanding his resources, be he wealthy or poor, as well as a means of winning his good will and affection. The gift described above, by contrast, is the very converse of this. If it were given with the legitimate intent of rendering to the recipient the true ownership of the money given, this would be consistent with the interest of aiding [the needy], expanding their means and eliminating the vice of greed and stinginess. As such, it would not be a ruse by means of which to avoid paying zakah. Note, then, that a legitimate intention will not undermine the objectives of the Law, whereas an illegitimate intention will undermine them.

The Book's Conclusion: How May The Lawgiver's Intents Be Known?

Al-Shāṭibī concludes his discussion with the words: "However, there is a need for a conclusion which serves to clarify this discussion of objectives still further and which defines precisely what is intended by it, God willing. For someone might say: The questions which have been addressed in this discussion are based on the knowledge of what the Lawgiver intends. But how is one to distinguish what the Lawgiver intends from what He does not?"

Before delineating the bases for determining the Lawgiver's intentions, al-Shāṭibī categorizes people – according to their stance on the

subject of the Lawgiver's objectives and the manner in which they may be determined – into the following three groups:¹⁵²

1. Those who hold that the only way to know the Lawgiver's objectives is through an explicit declaration by the Lawgiver Himself; this group is known as the Zahirites, or the Literalists.
2. Those who maintain the very opposite position, and which may be divided into two:
 - a) Those who do not recognize the apparent sense of any text whatsoever but, rather, consider that texts' objectives are always something other than what appears on the surface. Of this position al-Shāṭibī states, "This is the opinion held by all those who intend to nullify the Law, namely, the Batinites..."
 - b) Those who go to such extremes in analogical deduction that they give it more importance than the texts themselves. Of this group, al-Shāṭibī names no particular individual or school.
3. Those who hold that one should combine a consideration for the texts and their apparent meanings with a consideration for their (inward) meanings and the occasions which gave rise to them. This, says, al-Shāṭibī, is "the approach taken by most knowledgeable scholars. Hence, it is this approach which serves as the criterion by which the Lawgiver's objectives may be known."

Based on this general principle, al-Shāṭibī identifies the four bases for determining the Lawgiver's objectives. They are:

1. Primary, explicit commands and prohibitions.
2. Consideration of the bases for commands and prohibitions.
3. Consideration of secondary objectives (which are in the service of the primary objectives).
4. Silence on the part of the Lawgiver in situations which would appear to call for declaration and legislation.

The subject of how the Lawgiver's objectives may be determined calls for a clearer, fuller presentation than what is provided in this

summary. However, such a presentation requires that one gather material which lies scattered among al-Shāṭibī's various writings, including the various parts of *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-Itiṣām*, which is of no less importance than this concluding section. Hence, in view of what such a discussion requires by way of thoroughness and detail, I have thought it best to postpone it to a later section devoted specially to this topic, namely, the section of Chapter Three entitled, "By what means may the Lawgiver's objectives be known?"

[III]

Dimensions of the Theory

Al-Shāṭibī's theory of objectives is not found exclusively in the section of *al-Muwāfaqāt* devoted to this theme, namely, 'The Book of Higher Objectives' of which I have just presented a synopsis. Rather, it finds its way into the majority of al-Shāṭibī's writings.¹⁵³ This being the case, 'The Book of Higher Objectives' is not sufficient in and of itself for a complete elucidation of the theory of objectives, its various dimensions, and its effects.

In all that al-Shāṭibī writes, one finds that 'the objectives' are his companion, present in his words, exercising their sway over his views and rendering them more profound and discerning, while his views, in turn, render his theory clearer and more comprehensible. In fact, anyone who studies al-Shāṭibī will conclude that he wrote about nothing but *maqāsid al-Shari‘ah* and their outcomes.

The purpose of this section – which is, in reality, a complement to the one which preceded it – is to show the extensions of the theory of objectives in al-Shāṭibī's writings. Hence, we are still engaged in the presentation of the theory, and in what follows I will deal in some detail with the imprints left by 'objectives' in three particular realms, namely: (1) the five essentials (elsewhere than in 'The Book of Higher Objectives'),¹⁵⁴ (2) questions relating to actions classified as *mubāḥ*, or permissible (under the rubric of *al-aḥkām al-taklīfiyyah*, that is, rulings which define legal obligations), and (3)

causes and outcomes (under the rubric of *al-aḥkām al-wad'iyyah*, or rulings which specify causes, conditions and/or constraints on such obligations).

1. The Five Essentials

From his initial introductions to *al-Muwāfaqāt*,¹⁵⁵ al-Shāṭibī begins raising issues relating to the objectives of Islamic Law and relying on his analysis of such issues for support and clarification of his views as they relate to the fundamentals of jurisprudence. In the first introduction, which he devotes to the claim that the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence are definitive in nature and not just speculative,¹⁵⁶ he bases his most powerful arguments on the premise that the fundamentals of jurisprudence are founded on the universals of the Law, which can be nothing other than definitive. He states, “What I mean by ‘universals’ here are: the essentials, exigencies and embellishments.”¹⁵⁷

The definitive nature of these universals is beyond dispute. As al-Shāṭibī puts it, “The Muslim community – and, indeed, all religions – are in agreement that the Law was established to preserve the five essentials, namely, religion, human life, progeny, material wealth and the human faculty of reason. Moreover, knowledge of these universals is also considered essential by the Muslim community.”¹⁵⁸

From the introductions we move to ‘The Book of Evidence’ (Part 3 according to the book’s division in modern printings), where al-Shāṭibī lays the general foundation for examining legal evidence. In Question 8, for example, he states, “If, among the laws established in Madinah,¹⁵⁹ you find a universal principle, then think carefully on it and you will find that in relation to that which is still more general, it is a specific, or a complement to a universal principle. Evidence of this may be seen in the fact that the universals which the Shari‘ah has commanded us to preserve are five, namely: religion, human life, the faculty of human reason, progeny, and material wealth.”¹⁶⁰

What al-Shāṭibī means by this statement is that even if what are considered to be universal principles or general rules are found among the various forms of legislation which were instituted in

Madinah, they are, in reality, no more than branches of the more general and more important universals which, given their significance, were revealed in Makkah. Hence, the higher objectives of the Law and its principle foundations were secured in the Makkan Qur'an side by side with the fundamentals and principles of Islamic doctrine. Al-Shātibī then goes on to trace the five universals (or essentials) to their supporting evidence in the Makkan Qur'an.

As for the preservation of (the Islamic) religion and the correction and consolidation of faith in the Makkan Qur'an, it is a matter so familiar and clear to many that it requires no evidence or examples to be cited in its support. In fact, there has come to be a widespread, albeit mistaken, belief that this is all that the Makkan Qur'an consisted of. However, Imam al-Shātibī corrects this notion by presenting what the Makkan Qur'an contained by way of legal principles and universals.

In connection with the preservation of human life, for example, we read, "...and do not take any human being's life – [the life] which God has declared to be sacred" (Qur'an, 6:151), and "when the girl-child that was buried alive is made to ask for what crime she had been slain" (Qur'an, 81:8-9).

Preservation of human life includes the preservation of the faculty of reason, while the complement to the preservation of the faculty of reason may be seen in the Madinan prohibition of intoxicants and the establishment of a penalty for its violation. Hence, the preservation of the former is the foundation for the preservation of the latter. Similarly, the preservation of progeny was legislated in Makkah in the form of a prohibition against adultery and the command to refrain from all sexual misconduct, while the preservation of material wealth is ensured in the Makkan Qur'an by means of the prohibition against injustice, depriving orphans of their property, wastefulness, envy, giving short measure and weight, and corruption in the land. Commanding the doing of what is good and forbidding the doing of what is wrong – both of which are likewise necessary to preserve the aforementioned essentials – were explicitly enjoined in Makkah, as in the verse which reads, "O my dear son! Be constant in prayer, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing

of what is wrong" (Qur'an, 31:17). Moreover, the jihad which was instituted in Madinah was nothing but an offshoot of the command to enjoin the doing of what is good and prohibit the doing of what is wrong.¹⁶¹

When Imam Abū Ishaq moves on to the topic of abrogation (*naskh*), he comes armed with his awareness of the objectives and universality of the Law. Hence, in his discussion of Question 1 pertaining to the theme of abrogation, he reminds his readers that "the universal principles are established first, and it was these which were revealed to the Prophet in the Qur'an in Makkah. Then, in Madinah, these were followed by other things which served to complete the principles whose foundation had been laid in Makkah."¹⁶² This statement is not merely a repetition of al-Shāṭibī's understanding of the relationship between Madinan and Makkan legislation, important as it is. Rather, he reiterates the idea here and presents it in greater detail in view of what he wishes to build thereon in connection with the topic of abrogation. Specifically, he states in Question 2,

Now that it has been established that the rulings of the Shari'ah which were revealed in Makkah were, for the most part, universal in nature, the fundamental principles of the religion, it follows that the abrogation of these rulings should be a rare phenomenon,¹⁶³ since there is rarely an abrogation of a universal, even though theoretically speaking, it remains a possibility. Evidence for this may be found in a thorough inductive reading of the Shari'ah, a well as by the fact that the Shari'ah is based on the preservation of essentials, exigencies and embellishments, none of which has been abrogated in the least detail. On the contrary, what was revealed in Madinah served only to reinforce, consolidate and support them. This being the case, there is no proof of any universal ever having been abrogated, and whoever does a thorough reading of the books dealing with *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*, that is, later rulings which served to abrogate earlier ones, will verify what I am saying. Rather, whatever abrogations occurred applied only to the partial, or specific rulings revealed in Makkah, and such rulings in Makkah were few.¹⁶⁴

When, following his discussion of the Qur'an, al-Shāṭibī comes to the topic of the Sunnah, he puts his 'objectives-based'¹⁶⁵ perspective to use in drawing connections among the various types of evidence found in the Shari'ah, including both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as among the various areas of legislation in both their universals and their particulars. For just as he observes that the Madinan Qur'an in all its details was based upon the Makkian Qur'an with its universals, he likewise observes the fact that the Sunnah was based entirely upon the Qur'an, since both of them revolve around a single axis, namely, the objectives of Islamic Law as embodied in achieving human beings' interests on the triple levels of the essentials, exigencies and embellishments. Although I prefer to avoid lengthy quotations, I feel it necessary to quote the following extensive, but wonderful, passage, which provides details on the subject at hand which are absent even from the place one would have naturally expected to find them, namely, in 'The Book of Higher Objectives.' Al-Shāṭibī entitles the section concerned, "An Explication of the Various Facets of Interconnectedness and Complementarity Between the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and How the Qur'an is the Foundation of the Sunnah While the Sunnah is Subordinate Thereto and Based Thereon." In the course of enumerating these facets he states,

These include a view to what is evidenced by the Qur'an in general terms and which is found in the Sunnah in completeness, with additional explanation and clarification. The Holy Qur'an defines human interests in both this world and the next as a means of achieving such interests; similarly, it defines that which causes human beings harm and corruption as a means of preventing them. As we have seen, human interests are limited to the three aforementioned categories of essentials with their complements, exigencies with their complements, and embellishments with their complements. Besides these three, no others are mentioned in 'The Book of Higher Objectives.'

If we examine the Sunnah, we will find it to be simply a confirmation of these points. For the Qur'an includes them as principles for us to rely on, while the Sunnah includes them in the form of ramifications and

elucidations thereof, since you find nothing in the Sunnah which does not belong to one of these categories. The five essentials as rooted in the Qur'an are detailed in the Sunnah:

- The preservation of the religion takes place by three means: submission (*islam*), faith (*īmān*), and the doing of good (*iḥsān*). Their root is in the Qur'an, their elucidation is in the Sunnah, and they are completed through three things: (1) The invitation to it [the religion] through rewards and warnings, (2) Fighting through jihad against those who stubbornly resist it or seek to corrupt it, and (3) The correction of any defect in its foundation. The root of these things is found in the Qur'an and their perfect elucidation is found in the Sunnah.
- The preservation of human life is achieved in three ways, namely, by: (1) establishing its foundation through the legitimacy of procreation, (2) ensuring its survival after its having come into existence by providing food and drink (thereby ensuring its survival from within) and (3) providing clothing and shelter (thereby ensuring its survival from without).¹⁶⁶ The root of all these things is found in the Qur'an and is elucidated in the Sunnah. Moreover, it is completed through three things: (1) protecting them [one's progeny] from falling into that which is forbidden, such as sexual misconduct, by ensuring that they enter into valid matrimony and have at their disposal whatever related measures are needed, including divorce , *khul'**, *lī'ān**, and the like, (2) Ensuring that they do not receive nourishment which is harmful or lethal, and (3) Guaranteeing the provision of everything without which the things mentioned above would not be possible, including animals for slaughter as sacrifices, hunting, the right to impose penalties for crimes as set forth in the Law and the law of retribution in the case of homicide, consideration for ultimate consequences, and the like.
- Preservation of progeny falls within this same category, its principles being found in the Qur'an, and their elucidation in the Sunnah.
- The preservation of wealth is based on consideration for the fact that it is included among possessions as a whole, and on causing it to grow lest it not suffice for one's needs. Its complement consists in preventing circumstances or conditions which would interfere with preservation of

wealth through forcible deterrence, legally prescribed punishments and guarantees, all of which are found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

- Preservation of the faculty of reason has to do with that which will not corrupt it, and is found in the Qur'an. Its complement consists in the legitimacy of a legally prescribed punishment or forcible deterrence. At the same time, there is no specific reference to it in the Qur'an; hence, there is no specific ruling on it in the Sunnah. Rather, this has been left to the independent interpretation of the Muslim community.
- Preservation of honor, if it is counted among the essentials, has its origin in the Qur'an and is further clarified in the Sunnah through the provisions pertaining to *lī'ān** and *qadhf*.*

If you examine the exigencies, you will find that there is a consistent tendency to preserve the same order or one similar thereto; after all, the exigencies revolve around the essentials, as do the embellishments. The principles pertaining to Islamic Law in the Qur'an have been completed in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and nothing has been unaccounted for. This is clear from an inductive reading (of the Qur'an and the Sunnah), and will be easily perceived by anyone who is knowledgeable of them. It was likewise recognized by the pious ancestors, as evidenced by statements by some of them quoted earlier. For those who wish to know more, the focus of the exigencies is upon the provision of ease and respite, eliminating hardship, and kindness.

- Concern for [preservation of the] religion appears in those places which affirm the legitimacy of allowances. In relation to ritual purity, for example, this is illustrated by the permissibility of such things as waterless ablutions (*al-tayammum*) and consideration of an individual to be ritually pure in a legal sense when it proves impossible physically to remove a given impurity; in relation to ritual prayer, the legitimacy of allowances is illustrated by the permissibility of shortening prayers to two *rak'ahs*, exempting an individual from accountability if he or she is unconscious or in a state of *jam'**, or praying while seated or lying on one's side [if one is unable to stand or sit up, respectively]. In relation to fasting, such

allowances include the permissibility of breaking one's fast while on a journey or due to illness, and so on for all the various forms of Islamic worship. Hence, the Qur'an clearly stipulates certain allowances such as waterless ablutions, the shortening of prayer and breaking of one's fast in specific circumstances. When it does not, however, those Qur'anic passages which call for the elimination of hardship provide a sufficient foundation for the permissibility of such allowances. It is the job of the person qualified to engage in independent reasoning to apply the rule and to arrive at the appropriate allowances in accordance therewith; and the Sunnah is the primary exemplar in this regard.

- Also in connection with the preservation of human life, it is provided for in specific places, including those which stipulate the permissibility of allowances, such as the permissibility of eating an animal which has died naturally [as opposed to having been slaughtered in the Islamically prescribed manner] for someone who is in dire need of food and has no other nourishment available, the permissibility of providing consolation and assistance with one's zakah and other funds,¹⁶⁷ and the permissibility of hunting even if one is unable to shed the animal's blood¹⁶⁸ or slaughter it in the legally prescribed manner.
- In relation to procreation, [examples of allowances include] the permissibility of a marriage contract without the setting of a dowry, permitting some ambiguities in the contract for the sake of avoiding disputes as occurs in some sale agreements, allowing a divorce to come into effect by the utterance of the words, 'You are divorced' only three times, the allowance of divorce in the first place, *khul'*, and the like.
- With regard to material wealth as well, such allowances are illustrated by the permissibility of sales which entail a minor degree of uncertainty and risk given the inevitability of such in most cases, the permissibility of *salam*, or payment in advance, *bay'* al-'arāyā (bartering), *shuf'ah* (loans, preemption), *qirād*,* (or 'sleeping partnership,'), *musāqāh* (crop sharing), and the like, as well as the permissibility of deliberate, moderate enjoyment of life's licit pleasures.
- In connection with the preservation of the faculty of reason, allowances include the exemption from accountability for someone who is forced [to

partake of intoxicants] against his will or one who does so out of dire need as, for example, in situations in which one fears for his life due to hunger, thirst, illness and the like.

All such allowances are in accordance with the principle of ‘elimination of hardship’ (*raf‘ al-haraj*), since most of them are based on independent interpretations. The Sunnah has made clear what examples we are to emulate based on the interpretation of general statements found in the Qur'an, none of which would be violated by the Sunnah.

The category of ‘embellishments’ receives the same treatment as that of ‘exigencies,’ since all of them have their origin in the Qur'an. Hence after being presented in the Qur'an in either general or specific terms, they are clarified and explained more fully in the Sunnah.

The aim of all I have written here is to make my readers aware of these matters, after which the discerning among them will be guided from this to an understanding of that which has been alluded to but not mentioned explicitly. And all success is due to God alone.¹⁶⁹

In his discussion of commands and prohibitions, al-Shātibī relies a great deal, as is his custom, on the notion of objectives, using them as the criterion on the basis of which he argues for his views. Similarly, he relies on the division of legal rulings into the recognized categories of essentials, exigencies and embellishments to support his view that the commands and prohibitions contained in Islamic Law are not all of a single order or of equal importance. He states that, “Commands pertaining to essentials are not to be considered equal to those that pertain to exigencies or embellishments. Nor are those entities which serve to complete the essentials on the same level as the essentials themselves. On the contrary, there is a recognized disproportion between them, and in fact, even matters which pertain to the essentials are not all of equal weight.”¹⁷⁰ He then illustrates this principle by citing the recognized practice of placing greater importance on the preservation of the religion than on the preservation of human life, and of placing higher priority on preserving human life than on preserving the faculty of human reason.

As a consequence, both individual believers in their daily lives and

scholars qualified to engage in ijtihad need to demonstrate an awareness of this order and gradation in the commands of the Law and its prohibitions, since only in this way can they give each thing its due and place priority on that which merits it. If we neglect this perspective – which has been sanctioned by the Lawgiver – we are bound to fall into serious errors and suffer no little hardship, not to mention our having violated the Lawgiver's guidance by disregarding the order of preference which He himself has established. For the Law's commands are not all of the same order, nor do they all yield the same ruling, and the same is true for its prohibitions. Even commands which indicate that the action concerned is obligatory are of varying degrees of importance, as are prohibitions which communicate that the action concerned is forbidden, for both obligations and prohibitions in Islam differ in degree and importance.

Al-Shāṭibī makes use of this same notion in his treatment of the subject of religious innovations in *al-Itiṣām*. He writes,

Some acts of disobedience are minor sins, while others are major. Whether a given act of disobedience is to be classified as a major or a minor sin depends upon whether it is related to essentials, exigencies, or embellishments. If it touches upon the essentials, it will be the greatest of sins, and if it touches upon the embellishments, it will clearly be the most minor of sins, whereas if it touches upon the exigencies, it will fall somewhere between these two extremes. Moreover, each of these degrees has a complement, and it is impossible that the complement should be on the same order as that which is complemented. Rather, the complement is to that which it complements as a means is to an end. The means can never be on the same order as the end, and the differing degrees of violations and acts of disobedience may easily be observed.

Moreover, if one gives thought to the five essentials, one will find that they, too, are awarded differing degrees of emphasis. Preservation of human life, for example, is not given the same emphasis as preservation of the religion. Thus, even the sanctity of human life is considered a small thing when compared with that of the religion, and this is why unbelief is considered a justification for the shedding of blood, while preservation of the religion is a sufficient motivation for subjecting

oneself to the possibility of death and destruction for the sake of struggling against those who have rejected and turned against the religion. Similarly, preservation of the faculty of human reason and material wealth are given less emphasis than preservation of human life...¹⁷¹

He then moves on from this objectives-based introduction to his original theme, namely, innovations, and analyzes them in light of the objectives of the Law. He states, “This being the case, then innovations (*al-bida'*) are a type of disobedience, and just as there are disparities among the various acts of disobedience, so also are there disparities among the various innovations. There are some which have to do with the essentials (that is, in the sense that they are a violation thereof), others have to do with exigencies, and still others affect the realm of embellishments. Moreover, those which have an impact on the essentials might affect preservation of the religion, human life, progeny, the faculty of human reason, or material wealth...”¹⁷²

Based on this distinction among benefits and sources of harm or corruption and the resulting distinction among the Law’s various commands and prohibitions, al-Shāṭibī declares,

Legally speaking, an act will be judged according to what benefits it achieves or what harm or corruption it causes. The Law has made this clear, drawing a distinction between, on one hand, those acts which lead to major benefit and which it thereby classifies as pillars (*arkān*, sing., *rukñ*), or which cause serious harm or corruption and which it thereby classifies as major sins (*kabā'ir*, sing., *kabīrah*) and, on the other hand, those acts whose resulting benefit or harm is minor, in which case it terms them either charitable acts (*iḥsān*) or minor sins (*ṣaghā'ir*, sing., *ṣaghīrah*), respectively. In this way one may distinguish between that which is a pillar and fundamental of the religion, and that which is a branch or subsidiary, and between major and minor sins. Those commands to which the Law has given major importance are among the religion’s fundamentals, and those which it has given less importance rank among its branches and complements. Conversely, violations of those prohibitions to which the Law has given major importance are major sins, while violations of prohibitions to which

the Law assigns less importance are, therefore, minor sins, all of which is subject to the degree of benefit or harm which the acts in question have the potential to bring.¹⁷³

2. Questions Relating to That Which is Permitted (al-Mubāḥ)

Among the topics dealt with in virtually all writings on the subject of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and particularly since the 5th Century AH, is that of legal rulings. Such rulings are divided, as is generally known, into two types, namely, what may be termed ‘action-related rulings’ (*al-ahkām al-taklīfiyyah*) which serve to define legal obligations, and ‘condition-related rulings’ (*al-ahkām al-wad'iyyah*) which specify causes or conditions for such obligations and/or constraints thereon. According to the most widely agreed-upon division, the description of an action as *mubāḥ*, or ‘permitted,’ is one of the five categories of action-related rulings. What this means is that most *uṣūliyyūn*, and particularly later ones,¹⁷⁴ deal in their writings with issues relating to the category of *mubāḥ*. However, al-Shāṭibī’s treatment of the subject, as is the case with other subjects as well, differs significantly from that of other scholars, the reason for this being the overriding influence exerted on his thinking by the ‘objectives theory.’

Al-Shāṭibī opens his “*Kitāb al-Aḥkām*” (The Book of Rulings) with the category of *mubāḥ*, which he discusses in the context of five questions together with six ‘sections.’ Before presenting the first five questions, all of which relate to the category of *mubāḥ*, I will pause briefly to discuss Question 6 which, as I see it, should have been Question 1 under the heading of action-related rulings, since it is applicable to all of them. Moreover, it seems to me that Question 6 should have been the first issue to be discussed in relation to the category of *mubāḥ*, because what al-Shāṭibī states in his discussion of it – although it applies to the action-related rulings as a whole – has been objected to in connection with the category of *mubāḥ* in particular.¹⁷⁵ Hence, given that he begins with a treatment of the *mubāḥ*, he could have brought the two themes together by beginning with this particular issue.

Be that as it may, *al-Shāṭibī* states in Question 6 that “the five rulings¹⁷⁶ relate only to actions and omissions considered together with

their objectives.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, al-Shāṭibī is saying that action-related rulings are only applicable to human beings’ actions and omissions if they are accompanied by ‘intention.’ If, however, they occur without an aim, deliberateness, intention or awareness, they are “tantamount to actions by dumb beasts and inanimate objects.”¹⁷⁸

In so saying, al-Shāṭibī appears to be taking issue with the prevailing definition of legal rulings according to which a legal ruling is “divine discourse relating to human actions,” since divine discourse, according to al-Shāṭibī, is not related to human actions if they are devoid of intention.¹⁷⁹

Another observation, also having to do with the arrangement of the questions relating to the category of *mubāḥ*, is that after devoting the first five issues to a discussion of *mubāḥ*, al-Shāṭibī goes on to discuss the other action-based rulings. Then, at the conclusion of his discussion of action-based rulings, he devotes Questions 12 and 13 to a discussion of a further aspect of the subject of *mubāḥ*.¹⁸⁰ In any case, no matter how diverse and tangential al-Shāṭibī’s discussions happen to be, the ‘objectives thread’ is always there to bring them together and close the gaps among them, reminding you of their beginning as you approach their conclusion.

The first thing which al-Shāṭibī concludes in his discussions of the category of *mubāḥ* is that “that which is permissible, insofar as it is permissible, is something which one is neither required to do nor required to refrain from.”¹⁸¹ He then proceeds to express the same thought in the language of objectives, saying, “...As far as the Lawgiver’s intention is concerned, it makes no difference whether one performs such an action or refrains from it.”¹⁸²

What we are speaking of here is the essential meaning of the category of *mubāḥ*, or ‘permissible.’ Scholars have described actions which fall into this category as neutral in the sense that there is an equal preference, if you will, for performing them or refraining from them, and that one is free to choose between these two options. This, then, is the meaning of the term ‘permissible’ when considered in isolation from all attendant circumstances and influences. Viewed from this perspective, the Lawgiver intends neither that we perform such

an action nor that we refrain from it, and as such, neither choice is required of us, for if we are required either to perform it or to refrain from it, then it will fall into one of the other four categories of actions and can no longer be classified as ‘permissible.’

In declaring this perspective, al-Shāṭibī is responding to two points of view:

1. The view according to which we are required to refrain from actions categorized as ‘permissible,’ that to refrain from them is preferable to doing them, and that we should engage in them as infrequently as possible.
2. The view according to which we are required to perform actions which are categorized as permissible and that performing them is, in fact, obligatory, since every performance of a permissible act involves refraining from that which is forbidden, and refraining from that which is forbidden is obligatory. Hence, the performance of acts which are permissible is obligatory because of what it entails by way of refraining from that which is forbidden.

This second view, espoused by Mu‘talizite scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī, had been refuted long before and for this reason, al-Shāṭibī’s response to it is a brief two pages.¹⁸³ As for the first view, however, al-Shāṭibī devotes special attention to it, setting forth the evidence cited in its support and discussing it in full detail,¹⁸⁴ thereby testifying to its pertinence and its widespread popularity.

Among the arguments cited in support of the first view (i.e., according to which one is required to refrain from actions classified as permissible) is that occupying oneself with the performance of permissible actions will distract the individual from things which are more important, such as acts of obedience and supererogatory acts of piety. It may distract one even from carrying out one’s obligations, and might cause one to fall into certain forbidden actions. It is on this basis that some have condemned this world with its various enjoyments and attractions. It has been reported of the pious ancestors, for example, that they were hesitant to engage in so many permissible activities that abstinence from this world became the

byword of the righteous and the preferred path of the God-fearing.

In response to such arguments, al-Shāṭibī points out that the topic of discussion is that which is permissible in and of itself. As regards permissible acts which distract one from that which is superior to them or which cause one to fall into certain legal dangers, this is another matter, since in these cases, the permissible has been influenced by external factors and has thus become an expedient and a means to some other end. It is a recognized fact that means fall under the rubric of intentions or objectives, and that the ruling thereon is influenced accordingly. Hence, concludes al-Shāṭibī, occupying oneself with permissible activities and their enjoyment is permissible in and of itself; if such activities distract one from performing some obligation or cause one to fall into that which is forbidden, the ruling on them will change to reflect this development. Moreover, unexpected outcomes of doing that which is permissible, just as they may be blameworthy and thereby render the permissible action blameworthy, may also be praiseworthy, thereby rendering the permissible act praiseworthy as well. Hence, it makes no more sense unconditionally to favor abstention from permissible activities than it does unconditionally to favor engagement in them. After all, many permissible activities may assist the person who engages in them toward fulfilling his obligations, avoiding that which is forbidden, and engaging in acts of virtue and charity and in fact, this is the ideal for which such activities were intended (by the Lawgiver). As a certain Prophetic hadith expresses it, “What a blessing wealth is in the possession of the righteous man!”¹⁸⁵ And in the words of another: “Those with abundant wealth have taken the rewards, the advanced [spiritual] degrees and everlasting bliss.”¹⁸⁶

As for the claim that abstinence from permissible activities was the path followed by ascetics and the righteous, it cannot be accepted as a given. Firstly, the true mark of asceticism is abstinence from that which we are required to abstain from; however, that which is permissible in the purest sense is not included in what we are required to abstain from. Secondly, abstinence from certain permissible activities, if we consider this to be asceticism, is undertaken for the sake of some good purpose or intention and in order to occupy oneself

with something which is of greater importance. In such a case, abstinence is a means to an end and, as such, no longer pertains to the realm of the permissible. As al-Shāṭibī states it, “It [i.e., abstinence from what is permissible] is a virtue on account of the aim sought, not on account of the mere abstinence alone. This point is beyond dispute.”¹⁸⁷

This brings us to another aspect of the discussion of the permissible, and which provides clarification and greater detail relating to the foregoing, namely, that, “What is permissible ceases to fall in the category of ‘permissible’ by virtue of intentions and external factors.”¹⁸⁸ For example, a permissible activity may become desirable and even required if it is “in the service of one of the essentials, exigencies or embellishments,”¹⁸⁹ such as enjoyment of the food, drink and clothing which God has permitted to us. Such blessings and sources of enjoyment are permissible insofar as they are blessings and sources of enjoyment, and insofar as they are particular entities from which human beings may take what they wish and leave what they wish, however they wish. However, when viewed in their most general, or universal sense, they are seen to be in the service of an essential interest, namely, the preservation of life; and as such, they are activities in which we are commanded to engage and have thereby gone from being merely permissible to being required.

Conversely, a permissible activity may become undesirable and something which we are required to abstain from if it undermines any of the three categories of human interests (essentials, exigencies, and embellishments), as, for example, unnecessary divorce. For divorce is permissible and legitimate in circumstances which call for it. However, if it comes to be used for ends other than those for the sake of which it was instituted, it becomes a source of harm to a number of essential interests and exigencies and, as such, it becomes blameworthy. The same applies, moreover, to things such as amusement, play and relaxation, all of which are permissible so long as none of them involves some activity which is itself forbidden. However, if they exceed their proper bounds, they become blameworthy; hence, scholars and the pious ancestors took a dim view of those who make the most of neither this life nor the life to come.

In all other cases, permissible activities remain as they are, namely, permissible activities. This manner of viewing things leads al-Shāfi‘ī to divide the permissible into four categories. For, despite the fact that a given activity is permissible in and of itself, it might shift from the category of ‘permissible’ to one of the other four (namely, ‘obligatory,’ ‘recommended,’ ‘undesirable,’ or ‘forbidden’). Such a shift will occur based on how permissible activities function in individuals’ daily lives, or as a result of viewing these permissible activities in their most general, comprehensive sense for both individuals and the society.

This will become clearer through al-Shāfi‘ī’s division and the examples which he cites for each of the four categories to which a permissible activity might shift. The categories are as follows:

1. Permissible individually, recommended collectively. An example of an activity which falls into this category is the enjoyment of pleasant food, drink and clothing beyond what is necessary for survival.¹⁹⁰ The enjoyment of such blessings beyond the bare minimum is permissible on the individual level; in other words, it is a right enjoyed by individuals in a variety of situations and with respect to a variety of blessings of this nature. One is free to enjoy them or not to enjoy them. However, on the collective level, that is, in people’s lives as a society, to do so is desirable and even required. Hence, on the collective level it is recommended, and on the individual level, permissible.
2. Permissible individually, obligatory collectively. This includes eating, drinking, having sexual relations with one’s spouse, buying and selling, and all of the various trades and occupations. On the individual level these are all permissible activities. As God Almighty declares, “God has made buying and selling lawful and usury unlawful” (Qur’ān, 2:275); “Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth, as a provision for you” (Qur’ān, 5:96); and, “Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter]” (Qur’ān, 5:1). Hence, whether a given individual eats or drinks or

wears this or that, all such choices are permissible; there is nothing to prevent one from choosing them or refraining from them. However, notes al-Shāṭibī, “Suppose that everyone stopped doing these things; in this case, it would be an abandonment of one of the essential interests which we have been commanded to preserve. Hence, engaging in such activities is obligatory on the collective level.”¹⁹¹ The same applies to the choice of a given trade and practicing it at this time or that or in this or that manner, all of which falls within the realm of the permissible. There is nothing wrong with doing such things, and nothing wrong with not doing them; however, if such pursuits were abandoned on a mass scale, this would be the abandonment of a duty. Hence, they are permissible for the individual, but obligatory for the collectivity.

3. Permissible in moderation, undesirable in excess. The example which al-Shāṭibī cites from this category is that of going for picnics in orchards and listening to licit singing and the cooing of the doves, as well as all other permissible forms of recreation. Al-Shāṭibī states “Such things are permissible on the individual level. Hence, if someone does these things on a given day in a particular situation, there is nothing objectionable in it. However, if one were to do it all the time, it would become undesirable.”¹⁹²
4. Permissible in moderation, forbidden in excess. This includes permissible activities whose constant pursuit undermines justice. Hence, were it not for the fact that scholars consider the constant pursuit of such activities to be forbidden, they would not take exception to those who do so and categorize them as transgressors.

Al-Shāṭibī provides no examples of this category, nor does he cite any evidence in support of it with the exception of al-Ghazālī’s statement, “Constant pursuit of a permissible activity may turn it into a minor sin, just as constant pursuit of a minor sin turns it into a major sin.”¹⁹³

This final category may be difficult to acknowledge, especially given that al-Shāṭibī mentions it without illustrative examples or evidence in its favor. It is also difficult to distinguish between it and the category which precedes it, since both of them involve the constant pursuit of certain permissible activities. In this case, however, we say that such permissible activities become forbidden if one becomes addicted to them or is immoderate in their pursuit since in such a case, they have become like a passion to which one gives oneself over without reserve, a deeply ingrained habit and a waste of time, which provides a clear reason for deeming them prohibited. An illustrative example of this may be seen in the modern phenomenon of taking on a sport as a profession, as a result of which one's profession becomes that of 'player,' and one's life becomes one big game! Another, similar, example is some people's habit of spending long hours, day in and day out, in coffee shops, not to mention numerous other trivial, frivolous pursuits.

The distinction which al-Shāṭibī introduces amongst acts and omissions based on their particular and universal aspects is, in essence, a view based on interests and objectives. In support of this distinction he cites several types of evidence; however, the most important and central of these is the agreed-upon premise that "the Lawgiver established the Law based on a consideration for human interests. It has likewise been determined that the interests which are explicitly recognized by the Law are universals, not particulars, since rulings also apply to prevailing customs. And were it not for the fact that particulars are less worthy of consideration, this would not be acceptable."¹⁹⁴

Al-Shāṭibī then moves to the other aspect of the category of 'permissible' to which reference was made earlier, and the discussion of which he delays until the section on action-based rulings. Specifically, this aspect has to do with a permissible activity which one pursues in the process of preserving either essentials or exigencies, but the pursuit of which is attended by conditions which are contrary to the action's continuing to be deemed 'permissible.' If, for example, while in the process of pursuing some activity that God has rendered permissible to him, an individual is obliged to engage in certain

actions which are forbidden, do the permissible activities in which he is engaged continue to be deemed ‘permissible’ such that the person concerned may go on pursuing them regardless of the transgressions he commits along the way? Or do such conditions influence the ruling on the activity being pursued such that it ceases to be ‘permissible’ and is deemed ‘prohibited’ instead?

Examples of the type of situation being referred to here include passing through the streets and marketplaces even though this will entail hearing or seeing what one is forbidden to hear or see; mixing with other people even if this will force one to hear slanderous remarks, lies and lewd speech; sharing quarters with others even though this will lead to one’s engaging in prohibited behaviors; entering into marriage even though this will lead to certain dubious or forbidden practices; and seeking knowledge even though the activity is fraught with moral perils. Al-Shātibī touches upon this question in a number of different places, and in contexts other than the present one.¹⁹⁵ In each of these places, he deals with the issue, as is his wont, based on what are, for him, firmly established objectives-based principles. As a result, he deems that in the presence of moral impediments such as those mentioned above, the rulings on permissible activities will vary as follows according to their position on the scale of objectives:

1. If the permissible activities concerned are connected with preservation of the essentials and are among those classified earlier as permissible individually and obligatory collectively, it is acceptable for one to engage in them without being influenced by attendant impediments, since “preservation of that which is essential is an interest explicitly recognized by the Law, and whatever potential causes of harm or corruption happen to attend the activities involved in such preservation are excusable by virtue of the interest being achieved.”¹⁹⁶ Moreover, a recognized objectives-related principle is that if a complement to a given obligatory act causes said act to be nullified, then the complement itself should be disregarded and the obligatory should be retained in its absence. The situation which we are discussing here falls within this category

as well, since freedom from impediments is a complement to the pursuit of the essentials; hence, it would not be acceptable to abolish the essentials on account of such impediments.

2. If the permissible activities concerned are not connected with the pursuit of essentials but their abandonment would cause hardship in the individual's life, then "we should retain the original categorization of these activities as 'permitted' and cease giving consideration to unforeseen contingents, since that which would normally be forbidden becomes excusable for the sake of eliminating hardship, as will be seen below in Ibn al-‘Arabī's discussion of the topic of entering the bathroom. Therefore, even if there are many offensive stimuli in the streets and marketplaces, this need not prevent one from acting in order to meet genuine needs if failure to act would cause manifest hardship, for '[God] has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion' (Qur'an, 22:78)." ¹⁹⁷

As for the statement by Ibn al-‘Arabī to which al-Shātibī refers in the quotation above, he quotes it in Part 3 in a discussion of the same topic, but in a different context. Al-Shātibī writes,

If activities which are, in and of themselves, legitimate, such as buying, selling, mixing with and sharing quarters with others, etc. become tainted with that which is forbidden, and if corruption is rife in the land to the point where, if one goes about meeting one's needs and seeing to his affairs, he is in danger of coming in contact with what is forbidden and its attendant conditions, then the most obvious solution requires that he cease doing anything which would place him in such a situation. However, the truth requires that he meet his needs, be they on the individual or the collective level. Moreover, such needs will either be required in and of themselves, or in the service of something else which is required in and of itself. Hence, if the individual were obliged to cease all such activities, this would lead to constriction and hardship, or to obligations which would be beyond his ability to fulfill. However, members of the Muslim community have been exempted from all such

burdens. Hence, one must continue to do what is necessary to meet one's needs while refraining from whatever one is able to refrain from; as for what one cannot refrain from, one is exempted from responsibility for it since it is considered to be subsidiary rather than central. After ruling that it is permissible to enter the bathroom, Ibn al-‘Arabī states, “If someone objects, saying, ‘The bathroom is a place filled with that which is reprehensible; hence, entering it is closer to being forbidden than it is to being merely undesirable. How, then, could it possibly be permissible?’”, our reply will be that the bathroom is a place where one is ‘cured’ and restored to ritual purity. Consequently, it may be compared to a river, since it is frequently the site of that which is objectionable due to the fact that people’s private parts are exposed there. However, if a person needs to enter, he enters while averting his eyes and ears from that which is reprehensible to the extent that he is able. In our day and age, [even] the mosques and cities are teeming with objectionable stimuli. Hence, the bathroom is similar to a city in general, and to a river in particular.” This is what he said, and this is what it appears to mean.¹⁹⁸

3. If, by contrast, the permissible activities which are attended by moral impediments bear no connection to the pursuit of essentials, and if by abandoning them, one suffers no hardship, then the ruling on them becomes a matter of ijtihad, or independent reasoning. In the course of arriving at a decision, one must consider the conflict between the original ruling on such activities, namely, that they are permissible in and of themselves, and preponderant influences. If the decision is based on the original ruling on such activities, one will conclude that they must continue to be deemed permissible; if, on the other hand, it is based on preponderant influences, emphasis will be placed on the moral impediments which attend them and, as a consequence, they will be deemed forbidden. After presenting the arguments in favor of both points of view, al-Shātibī concludes, “There are numerous arguments in favor of both positions, and my intention here is simply to draw attention to the fact that the question is subject to independent reasoning. And God knows best.”¹⁹⁹

Al-Shāṭibī reaches the same conclusion on this question in Part 3, where he writes, “The question is open to more than one solution, subject to two competing points of view.”²⁰⁰ However, in Part 4 he does not devote the same attention to the distinction among levels; instead, he adheres in each of the three categories above to the original ruling that such activities are permissible in and of themselves, stating, “If activities relating to the essentials, as well as to exigencies and embellishments, are attended outwardly by contingents which are not viewed favorably by the Law, it may be concluded that undertaking whatever activity is required to achieve human benefit is acceptable provided that one exercise the greatest possible reserve, though without the imposition of hardship.”²⁰¹

In support of this judgment al-Shāṭibī cites a variety of examples, some of them having to do with the essentials, others with exigencies, and still others on the level of embellishments, such as attending funeral processions.²⁰² However, in Part 3 he excludes from the category of ‘permissible’ those activities which he earlier classified as permissible in moderation, undesirable or forbidden in excess,²⁰³ stating that if such an activity is attended or associated with that which is morally objectionable, it is not permissible to engage in it. Examples of such activities are singing which would otherwise be permissible, and various types of otherwise permissible entertainment. Al-Shāṭibī states that it is not acceptable to pursue such activities on the pretext that they are permissible if they are associated with anything forbidden.

3. Causes and Effects

Al-Shāṭibī’s discussion of causes is the longest of all his discussions devoted to condition-related rulings (*al-ahkām al-taklīfiyyah wa al-ahkām al-wad'iyyah*); in fact, it is the longest of all his discussions relating to rulings as a whole, both action-related and condition-related rulings together. It is also the discussion most clearly colored by the notion of ‘objectives.’ My choice of title for this section is based on the fact that these discussions are almost entirely limited to the relationship between causes and their effects.

As for the connection between causes, effects and objectives it may be said that causes and effects bear a connection to both divine and human intentions, although they are most closely linked to human intentions.

Before touching upon what concerns us in relation to this topic, I should point out that although al-Shāṭibī divides causes, as well as all condition-related rulings (*al-aḥkām al-waḍ'iyyah*) into: (1) those which are within human control and capability, and (2) those which are not within human control. Even so, he focuses in his thirteen ‘questions’ devoted to causes upon those causes which are within human control. Specifically, the causes around which his discussions and conclusions revolve include the following: (1) Earning money (through buying and selling, agriculture and professional work) considered as a basis for, or cause behind, the preservation of life, the validity of ownership, and the permissibility of enjoyment, and (2) marriage, considered as the basis (cause) for the permissibility of a husband and wife enjoying each others’ bodies, as well as the basis for procreation, one’s inheriting from the other, and the sanctity of relationships by marriage. Moreover, just as he bases his conclusions and principles upon legitimate causes such as these, he also bases them on illegitimate causes such as murder, adultery, and extortion, all of which engender numerous rulings and effects.

Let us now turn to the principles and rulings which al-Shāṭibī establishes in accordance with his objectives-based outlook. One such principle is that the Lawgiver, in determining causes, has their effects as His intention. He states, “The establishment of causes requires that the One who established them – that is, the Lawgiver – have the intention of seeing their effects.”²⁰⁴ After all, it would make no sense for Him to establish causes without intending their effects.

Another firmly established objectives-related principle is that “legal rulings have been issued in order to achieve benefits and to prevent harm and corruption. These, then [i.e., the achievement and the prevention of harm], are their effects. Moreover, if we know that causes have been legislated for the sake of their effects, then the intention of establishing causes necessitates the intention of bringing

about effects.”²⁰⁵ Hence, the establishment of causes can guide us to the knowledge of the Lawgiver’s intention to bring about their effects. This principle will prove useful to us in relation to a theme to be detailed further below, namely, “How the Lawgiver’s higher objectives may be determined.”²⁰⁶

So long as we are dealing with the theme of causes, I want to draw attention to the connection between this question (Question 4) and two other questions (Questions 12 and 13), which are only mentioned much later and which should actually have been placed directly after Question 4, since they contain details and definitions of what is discussed in Question 4 in the most general terms. It might be inferred from what is said in Question 4, for example, that all effects which result from causes were intended by the One who established these causes; however, this is a dangerous generalization. In the discussions of Questions 12 and 13, we find that in relation to their causes, effects belong to one of two categories:

1. Effects for the sake of which their causes were established, either as primary objectives or as secondary objectives, both of which²⁰⁷ are expounded in ‘The Book of Higher Objectives.’²⁰⁸
2. All other effects, including those whose causes are known or believed not to have been established for their sake, and those concerning whose causes it is not known whether they were established for their sake or not.²⁰⁹

Hence, we have three categories of effects, namely: (1) effects whose causes we know to have been established for their sake, (2) effects whose causes we know not to have been established for their sake, and (3) effects concerning whose causes we do not know for certain whether they were established for their sake or not. It appears that what al-Shātibī concludes and applies unconditionally in the context of Question 4 applies to the first of these three categories. As for the other two categories of effects, they call for a separate treatment; in the case of the second category, they are known not to have been intended by the Lawgiver, while in the case of category three, it

calls for reflection and investigation.²¹⁰

It should be noted here that although the Lawgiver intends effects by means of causes, this should not be taken to mean that such effects are included in what human beings are held responsible for. Rather, human beings are held accountable for causes only, and not for their effects. Consequently, when one acts to bring about causes (legitimate causes, that is), he or she is not obliged to intend the effects. This is what al-Shāṭibī concludes in Question 3, where he states, “When human beings act to establish causes, they are not required to intend, or even to turn their attention to, their effects. Rather, all that is required of them is that they act in accordance with the rulings which have been laid down, whether they have to do with causes or anything else, and whether their occasions are known or not.”²¹¹ That is to say, where human beings are concerned, it is sufficient that they bring about causes in their correct, legitimate form; however, they are not held accountable for intending these causes’ effects, since they are not held accountable for the effects themselves. Rather, it is God who takes responsibility for effects and for the causal connection between them and their causes. As al-Shāṭibī puts it, “So then, the Lawgiver’s intention that effects should occur has nothing to do with an intention for which human beings are held accountable; rather, human beings are only required to intend effects if some evidence for this requirement exists. However, there is no such evidence;”²¹² and, “there is no explicit evidence in the Law to indicate that human beings are required to intend effects.”²¹³ Again, it should be noted that this unconditional statement calls for reflection and examination, since in ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ (under the heading of ‘human objectives’), al-Shāṭibī concludes that “the Lawgiver’s aim for human beings is for their intention in what they do to be in agreement with His intention in laying down legislation,”²¹⁴ which requires that the individual intend, through the causes which he brings about, to bring about the effects for the sake of which the causes were legislated. Hence, the person bringing about the causes is required to aim for effects just as the Lawgiver does, whereas what al-Shāṭibī stated earlier was that human beings are not held accountable for such an aim.

Al-Shāṭibī was not unaware of this ‘contradiction’ between the conclusion he had reached in “*Kitāb al-Aḥkām*” and what he had stated in “*Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*.²¹⁵ Consequently, we find that in ‘The Book of Rulings,’ he quotes to himself the objection based on what he wrote in ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ (by saying, “And if someone were to say...”). In addition, we find that after stating his conclusion in ‘The Book of Higher Objectives,’ he writes, “If we clarify the details of the objectives as they relate to the individual, we find that they may be understood in light of what was mentioned in ‘The Book of Rulings’ in connection with the individual’s pursuit of causes,²¹⁶ where five aspects thereof are treated as they relate to intentions which are either in agreement with or in violation of [the objectives of the Lawgiver]. Hence, the reader is encouraged to review what is written there for further clarification.”²¹⁷

The question to which al-Shāṭibī refers the reader is Question 6 on the topic of condition-related rulings. This discussion is based upon what precedes it, and which he introduces with the words, “Since it has been established that it is not necessary for one to intend effects, the individual may thus choose whether or not to aim for them.”²¹⁸ Then, having demonstrated the matter of individual choice in whether or not to aim for effects, al-Shāṭibī moves on to the question to which he has referred the reader, saying, “Given the foregoing,²¹⁹ attention to effects may be divided into three levels”:²²⁰

1. On the first level, the individual acts to bring about causes with the belief that he is the effective actor and that it is he who brings about effects, or that the effects are a necessary, inevitable result of their causes. However, he states, “this is idolatry, or similar to it,”²²¹ which of course is unacceptable.
2. On the second level, the individual exerts efforts to bring about causes with the notion that such causes generally lead to specific effects, and that this is the nature of things as they were created. This is the level of most people’s thinking, and there is nothing wrong with it, although the third level is the preferable one.

3. On the third level, the person exerts effort to bring about causes with the thought that God Almighty is the One who produces effects from them if He wills, and who frustrates them if He wills. This level is superior to the preceding one, since the preceding level is dominated by consideration for and dependence upon ‘what happens in general,’ which results in a certain degree of heedlessness of the true Producer of Effects, namely, God Almighty.

These, then, are the levels of concern with effects. As for abandoning concern for effects, this is also manifested on three levels:²²¹

1. The person exerts effort to bring about causes, considering that this is a test and affliction by means of which God determines how His servants will conduct themselves. Hence, he considers himself accountable to God for bringing about these causes as a test, and this is his sole concern.
2. The person enters into the effort to bring about causes based on the simple notion that he is God’s servant; hence, he is fulfilling the requirements of servanthood and has no concern for causes, effects, or causality. For he is simply a servant of God, conducting himself in accordance with his Master’s will.
3. The person engages in efforts to bring about causes based on the thought that they are legitimate, permissible causes, and that they have effects which are produced by their Creator, Glory be to Him, if He so wills. This person’s action is likewise based on the belief that the requirement that human beings strive to bring about such causes is an affliction and a test. Al-Shāṭibī states,

This aim includes within it all of the foregoing, since the person has sought to achieve the Lawgiver’s objective without looking to any other entity. He has come to know God’s objective in these matters, as a result of which everything deriving from this causal connection, both that of which he is aware and that of which he is not aware, has been

fulfilled for him. This person seeks effects through earthly causes, yet knows that God is the Producer of Effects and the Sender of Affliction. He is fully realized in the sincere pursuit of God through these means; hence, his intention is pure even though it includes the pursuit of effects, since his effort is devoid of the thought of any being other than God or of anything which would defile the purity of his intention.²²²

Given the fact that al-Shāṭibī includes in Level 6 the virtues of all five previous ones, yet without any of the “idolatry and impurity” which taint some of them – and this despite the fact that the person described in Level 6 intends earthly effects – it is clearly the level which he deems superior. Moreover, what this leads us to observe is that al-Shāṭibī grants the individual freedom either to intend effects or not to intend them – without any distinction between the former and the latter – despite²²³ the “idolatry and impurity” which may taint one’s concern with and attachment to effects. Because of this possibility, al-Shāṭibī praises all levels of indifference to effects, yet praises none of the levels of concern for effects with the exception of Level 3, since Level 1 entails a denial of God, while Level 2 entails forgetfulness of God; it is these phenomena to which al-Shāṭibī refers as “idolatry and impurity.” However, if the individual’s intention is free of such defects, his concern for effects and his intending of them become preferable to a lack of concern for them. And thus it is that we escape the ‘contradiction’ referred to above and arrive at harmony with al-Shāṭibī’s statement in ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ that “the Lawgiver’s objective for human beings is for their intention in what they do to be in agreement with His intention in laying down legislation.”

This same wariness lest the individual fall into “idolatry and impurity” causes al-Shāṭibī to return to this theme once again following Question 9, where he appends five additional ‘sections’²²⁴ in which he argues in favor of not concerning oneself with effects and committing them completely to God, Powerful and Majestic is He. The reason for this, states al-Shāṭibī, is

that the person who establishes a cause with the realization that the

effect is not due to the cause [itself] – diverting his attention from the effect and committing it to its true Effector – will be more grateful, more sincere and more able to entrust his affairs to God and depend on Him entirely; such a person will be able to demonstrate greater patience and perseverance in establishing those causes which he has been commanded to while avoiding those which are forbidden, and be more capable of achieving lofty spiritual stations and states pleasing [to his Lord].²²⁵

The reason for this is that attachment to effects may cause us to forget the true Producer of Effects. Or it may cause us to forget to thank Him for what He has given by way of results and fruits. Such attachment can be exhausting for the person concerned, so intense is his anxiety and concern over effects and either fear lest they not be realized, or grief over their not having materialized as he had hoped. All of these are on the order of “impurities and false gods” which prevent the individual from achieving what al-Shātibī refers to as “lofty spiritual stations and states pleasing [to his Lord].”

However, one can be delivered from these afflictions and become more moderate in his concern for effects, bearing in mind that they are in God’s hands and becoming as one who “seeks from the Producer of Effects Himself whatever the cause requires, as though he were petitioning the Producer of Effects with the cause’s hand outstretched just as he would petition Him for other things, lifting his hands in supplication.”²²⁶ In so doing, one will have escaped from the blameworthy attachment to effects, since the source of these afflictions is “the pursuit of effects by means of the cause itself,” and the belief “that the cause is that which gives rise to effects – a fearsome state of mind all too likely to lead to the aforementioned sorts of corruption.”²²⁷

However, once al-Shātibī is confident that he has issued sufficient warnings against the baneful consequences of excessive attachment to effects, he goes back to arguing in favor of the opposite point of view – which may be the stance he most favored to begin with – by pointing out the advantages and benefits of concern for effects when engaged in establishing causes. For example:

1. Al-Shāṭibī encourages the individual to be aware of the consequences, be they bad or good, which may result from the connection between causes and effects. This is a type of consideration for the results of one's actions, which is a recognized principle of Islamic Law. Thus, the Qur'an stipulates that "if anyone slays a human being – unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind: whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind" (Qur'an, 5:32). Similarly, we have a Prophetic hadith which states that, "Not a soul is killed unjustly but that Adam's first son bears some measure of guilt on its account, since he was the first person to establish the practice of killing."²²⁸ In another hadith we read that, "The person who utters a word which meets with God's favor may think that it has not been heard, yet for this word, God will raise him to a higher level of Paradise. Conversely, the person who utters a word that stirs God to anger may give no thought to what he said, only to have God cast him in Hell for seventy years."²²⁹ There is also a well-known hadith which speaks of "whoever establishes a practice in Islam..."²³⁰

All of these texts urge individuals to have concern for effects and to take them into consideration²³¹ when establishing causes. In this connection, he quotes a long statement by al-Ghazālī²³² in which he cites still other passages from the Qur'an, and after which he comments, saying, "Hence, if one gives some thought to the ultimate consequences of his actions, this may give him pause before he does the things [he is contemplating]...."²³³

2. God, Almighty and Majestic is He, has caused effects, generally speaking, to reflect their causes in terms of straightness and crookedness. If the cause is sound and if the causal relationship is functioning as it ought to, the effect will likewise be sound, and vice-versa. Hence, if there is something wrong with an effect, jurisprudents look to the one who brought about the causes to see whether he/she is sound or not. If the person responsible for the causes is sound, then no fault

can be found there; otherwise, blame falls on this link in the chain. Have you not observed that they demand guarantees of the physician, the copper, the cook, and any other artisan if it is established that he is guilty of negligence, either because he is discovered to be lacking in experience, or due to simple dereliction on his part? Otherwise, however, no guarantees are required of him...

If we only concern ourselves with effects insofar as they are an indication of their causes' soundness or lack thereof,²³⁴ we will have come upon a wonderful law by means of which to determine whether causes are, or are not, operating in accordance with the purposes for the sake of which they were established. Outward actions are evidence of that which is inward or concealed. If the outward is ridden with holes, the inward is judged to be in the same condition; and conversely, if the outward is sound, the inward is judged to be sound as well. This is a general principle of jurisprudence and of all rulings which pertain to daily customs and are based on empirical experience. Demonstrating concern for effects in this respect is beneficial in that it makes the Law into a limit. Indeed, it constitutes the entirety of legislation and the foundation of legal accountability as they pertain to establishing the limits of Islamic rites, both private and public.²³⁵

Lastly, and as I have pointed out above, al-Shāṭibī was aware of the fact that he had taken the discussion of this issue in two different, and we might even say, opposing, directions, the first of which requires that we disregard effects, and the second of which requires that we lend our attention to effects and take them into consideration when we are involved in producing causes. In fact, when arguing for either of these two perspectives, he would always present the opposite perspective in the form of an objection, saying, “And if someone were to say...”

In order to resolve the contradiction, al-Shāṭibī established a criterion by means of which to distinguish between those cases in which attention must be paid to effects due to the benefit which this will bring, and those cases in which no attention should be paid to effects given the harm which such attention might cause. He states,

If attention to the effect has the potential of both strengthening and completing the cause, encouraging the person concerned to do his utmost to perfect it, then it will bring benefit. If, by contrast, attention to the effect has the potential of neutralizing, weakening or undermining the cause, then it will bring harm.²³⁶

Details illustrating this principle have already been presented and explicated. However, what concerns us here is that the principle itself rests upon a clear objectives-based, and interest-oriented point of view; hence, whatever serves human interests and divine objectives should be desired and sought, and whatever harms them should be censored and avoided.

Fundamental Issues in al-Shāṭibī’s Theory

In the preceding two chapters I attempted to summarize the theory of objectives as formulated by al-Shāṭibī in his *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid* (The Book of Higher Objectives) of *al-Muwāfaqāt*. In addition, I presented the various dimensions of this theory and its effect on his *uṣūl*-related thought, all of which sheds light on the importance of the objectives of the Law in the formation and direction of Islamic thought. With this foundation in place, I will now move on to the study and discussion of certain fundamental aspects of the objectives theory. And since a detailed commentary on all that al-Shāṭibī had to say concerning the objectives of the Law would be of limited benefit, I will therefore limit myself to a discussion of the major issues in al-Shāṭibī’s theory. In this chapter I will examine three issues which I consider to be the most critical to the topic of objectives in general, and to al-Shāṭibī’s thought in particular. This will then be followed by a final chapter which presents still other, complementary, aspects of al-Shāṭibī’s thought as well as an overall assessment of the theory of objectives.

[I]

The Question of *Ta‘līl**

As we have had occasion to mention,¹ al-Shāṭibī presents a ‘scholastic introduction’ to his *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid* in which he touches upon

the notion of the Law's being subject in its entirety to *ta‘līl*, in other words, the notion that all of it may be understood in light of its concern for human interests and the occasions which gave rise to it. I want to return to this theme here, for two reasons:

1. The aforementioned introduction is so brief (a mere two pages) that it might well be described as inadequate in light of the major significance of the question of *ta‘līl*, which constitutes the foundation for the entire objectives theory. Consequently, it requires more elaboration than it is given in this terse introduction.
2. Despite – or perhaps because of – the brevity of this introduction, al-Shāṭibī raises issues which call for further discussion and investigation, particularly when he makes reference to those who take a stance for or against the practice of *ta‘līl*.

Legal Rulings Between *Ta‘līl* and *Ta‘abbud**

In the beginning of the aforementioned introduction to *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*, al-Shāṭibī states, “Before embarking on the required discussion, allow us to introduce our topic with an uncontested, scholastic premise, that is, with the affirmation that all laws within Islam have been established for the sole purpose of serving human interests in both this life and the next. This is a claim in relation to which arguments must be presented, both pro and con; however, this is not the appropriate place for such a discussion.”

Al-Shāṭibī describes the content of his introduction as being ‘incontestable,’ which means that there is no disagreement concerning it. Even so, he feels the need to add that, “This is a claim in relation to which arguments must be presented, both pro and con,” which cannot be said of claims which are uncontested. It is also unclear what he means when he states that “this is not the appropriate place for such a discussion,” since it happens to be an eminently appropriate place for it. And he does, in fact, offer proof in support of his claim, albeit with extreme brevity. Perhaps what he means to say is that detailed arguments in connection with the matter will be

forthcoming later in the book.

Be that as it may, al-Shāṭibī then proceeds further to contradict his statement about the incontestability of his introductory premise by noting that “there has been disagreement over it in the realm of scholastic theology, with al-Rāzī claiming that neither divine precepts nor divine actions may be explained in light of their logical bases or a concern for human interests. The Mu'tazilites, by contrast, are in agreement that divine precepts may be interpreted in light of their preservation of human interests; moreover, this is the view preferred by most later jurisprudents.” How is one to reconcile this statement with al-Shāṭibī's earlier affirmation that his opening premise is “incontestable,” unless what he means by this term is that it is incontestable as far as he personally is concerned, or that it is incontestable despite the fact that some have nevertheless chosen to disagree with it? This latter possibility is the most likely; however, it should have been made clearer.

As for the introductory premise's being incontestable in al-Shāṭibī's own estimation, of this there can be no doubt. Indeed, he considers it to be an absolute certainty, a certainty for which he relies, as usual, on an inductive reading of the Law. In the course of the introduction, al-Shāṭibī quotes a part of this reading on the basis of which it may be concluded that the Law in its entirety has been established for the sake of human interests. Then he states, “If an inductive reading leads to this conclusion, and if in relation to a question such as this one it offers us any knowledge, then we may conclude with certainty that this principle applies to virtually all details of the Law.”

In a variety of places and on various occasions, al-Shāṭibī reaffirms and reclarifies this point. In his discussion of Question 7 of Type 1, for example, he states, “If it has been established that the Lawgiver's intention in legislating is to preserve human interests, both eternal and temporal – and this in a way which applies consistently on the levels of both universals and particulars, and in regard to essentials, exigencies and embellishments alike – then there can be doubt that it was established in this way eternally, universally and all-inclusively, in relation to all sorts of obligations, all types of human beings, and under all circumstances. And in fact, this is how we have found it to

be, may God be praised.”

Al-Shāṭibī continues in the same vein throughout *al-Muwāfaqāt*, stating and restating in the most decisive terms that virtually all rulings of the Law have been laid down for the sake of human interests. He writes, for example, in *Kitāb al-Aḥkām* “It is a known fact concerning the Law that it was established for the sake of human interests. For every legal obligation which it imposes is either to prevent some type of harm or corruption and/or to achieve some benefit.”²

In order to clarify his stance on the matter of *ta‘līl*, it should be mentioned that al-Shāṭibī frequently draws a distinction between rulings which pertain to customs and daily transactions and those rulings which pertain to acts of worship, since in connection with the former, the established approach is that of consideration for human interests and *ta‘līl*, that is, interpreting them in light of their logical bases and the occasions which gave rise to them, whereas in connection with the latter, the established approach is that of devoted, unquestioning submission and abstention from *ta‘līl*.

The first approach to legal rulings is supported by a number of factors. The first of these is an inductive reading of the Law, which reveals that the Lawgiver’s objective is to preserve human interests. This objective is reflected, for example, in rulings that pertain to daily customs, in which one finds that whereas something might be forbidden in a situation in which it would serve no human interest, it may be permitted in another situation in which it does serve such an interest.³ The second factor which supports this first approach (i.e., consideration for human interests and *ta‘līl*) is that the Lawgiver has explained many of the bases and wise purposes behind legal rulings that pertain to daily customs, examples of which have been cited earlier. Most such explanations, moreover, are presented in terms of an ‘appropriateness’⁴ which, if presented to the human mind, will be comprehensible and acceptable.⁵

As for the second approach, on the basis of which rulings which pertain to acts of worship are accepted in an attitude of devotion and submission while the prescribed limits are observed without question, it is also supported by an inductive reading of the Law.⁶ This may be seen in the fact that many of the rulings relating to acts of

worship – with respect to the manner in which they are to be performed, the number of times they are to be performed, the times at which they are required, conditions for their validity, etc. – cannot be explained on the basis of logic or specific occasions which gave rise to them; nor is it possible to determine exactly what human interest they serve based on mere reasoning. This is true of the situations which require ritual purity, for example, since the ritual purity required of the Muslim goes beyond the site of a ritually impure substance. Someone who is perfectly clean may still be required to perform ritual ablutions, while someone else who is quite dirty may, nevertheless, be in a state of ritual purity. In like manner, we find that the practice of *tayammum** is considered an acceptable substitute for regular ritual ablutions, which would make no sense if one did not approach it with an attitude of unquestioning submission. The same principle, moreover, applies to many other rulings relating to acts of worship, in connection with which the use of *ta'lil* and *munāsabah*⁷ is the exception rather than the rule.

Based on this principle, namely, not seeking to identify the bases for rulings relating to acts of worship, al-Shāṭibī views as groundless the attempts made by some scholars to identify the ‘wise purposes and hidden wisdom’ underlying certain worship-related rulings. He does not consider such attempted explanations to arise from solid learning or reasoning; rather, he views them as mere ‘scholars’ tales,’ as it were. He notes, for example,

‘wise purposes’ which are derived to explain things whose meaning cannot be comprehended, particularly those pertaining to required acts of worship – such as the requirement that ritual ablutions include the washing of certain parts of the body and not others, the requirement that ritual prayer be performed in a certain manner, including the lifting of the hands, standing, bowing, prostrating, etc., and not in some other way, the requirement that Muslims fast during the day rather than at night,⁸ that ritual prayers be performed at certain times of the day and night and not others, that the pilgrimage to Makkah involve the performance of specific actions and not others, that such acts be performed at certain locations and not others, and that the pilgrimage

be concluded in a particular mosque, etc. There are, in addition, other acts of worship the bases for which cannot be readily understood and which would not even suggest themselves to one's mind. Yet in spite of this, there are people who attribute to them wise purposes which they claim to be the basis for the Lawgiver's having established these practices. All such claims, however, rest on surmise and conjecture which have nothing to do with the subject at hand and upon which no action whatsoever is based...⁹

This, then, is al-Shāṭibī's overall perspective on the matter of *ta'līl*, which can be summarized further by saying that he holds that the validity of interpreting Islamic Law in terms of its concern for human interests is a certainty which admits of no doubt, and that this truth applies to the entire Law with the exception of those rulings having to do with acts of worship, which need to be accepted with unquestioning submission and devotion without regard for what underlies them by way of bases or wise purposes. Hence, the foundation for dealing with rulings such as these is to refrain from *ta'līl*, even though they most certainly do have a basis in both logic and human interest which is known to God Almighty.

The first part of al-Shāṭibī's view may be considered beyond dispute and will be clarified and finalized further in what follows, whereas the second part calls for examination and discussion. Before this, however, it should be pointed out that al-Shāṭibī is not alone in holding that the foundation for dealing with rulings relating to Islamic acts of worship is to refrain from *ta'līl*; on the contrary, this is the view held by the vast majority of scholars, and is often attributed to Mālik himself.¹⁰ Al-Maqqarī (al-Shāṭibī's shaykh) held that it was among the principles established by al-Shāfi'i, as opposed to Abū Ḥanīfah, who held that "the foundation [for dealing with all aspects of the Law] is *ta'līl*, however difficult it may be."¹¹ Al-Maqqarī then states, "And the truth is that [even] in the case of those things whose meaning cannot be discerned through human reason, their forms, features and associated conditions are still binding." He affirms this same view elsewhere, as, for example, in Rule 296 where he writes, "According to Imam Mālik and Imam Muḥammad,¹² it is

not possible to identify the bases for zakah-related texts which specify the amounts which one is to contribute of various types of wealth, since the established approach to rulings pertaining to acts of worship is, as we have seen, to adhere strictly to their concrete meanings, since this is what is required of us.¹³ In contrast, al-Nu‘mān¹⁴ states that ‘the basis for [such rulings] is the provision of financial where-withal to establish the rights of the poor’.”

One might well ask then, is this approach fully sound and universally accepted? In other words, can it be taken as a given that the established approach toward rulings on acts of worship in Islam is to take them at face value and apply them literally without giving any consideration to their objectives, wise purposes and meanings? And is it really true that refraining from *ta‘lil* is the most widely accepted approach toward such rulings, with *ta‘lil* being the exception rather than the rule? These and other questions call for the following clarifications: We find all of the Islamic forms of worship explained as to their purposes and bases in the very texts where they are laid down as requirements. Such explanations are explicit and need not be arrived at by way of induction or conjecture. Concerning ritual prayer we read, “Verily, I – I alone – am God; there is no deity save Me. Hence, worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me!” (Qur'an, 20:14) and, “Be constant in prayer, for behold, prayer restrains [man] from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason” (Qur'an, 29:45). Concerning fasting we read, “O you who have attained to faith! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of God” (Qur'an, 2:183). Concerning the pilgrimage we read, “Hence, [O Muhammad,] proclaim thou unto all people the [duty of] pilgrimage... so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of God on the days appointed...” (Qur'an, 22:27,28). And in connection with zakah we read, “[Hence, O Prophet,] accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of God, so that thou mayest cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity” (Qur'an, 9:103). Moreover, this is just one aspect of the basis for zakah, which Abū Ḥanīfah considered to be the primary objective for the

sake of which zakah was established. In his view, zakah “was legislated as a means of disciplining the soul through a reduction in wealth, since contenting oneself with one’s material wealth is among the things which lead to tyranny and corruption.”¹⁵

As for the other aspect of the basis for zakah, it is referred to in the Prophetic hadith which reads, “It is taken from their wealthy and given back to their poor.”¹⁶ This hadith is clarified and detailed by the Qur’anic verse which lists the groups of people among whom zakah funds are to be distributed, since this verse makes it clear that the objective of zakah is to meet the needs of these eight groups,¹⁷ or those of them which exist in any given society. Most scholars hold that this is the primary objective of zakah. Moreover, Imam al-Shāfi‘ī – who is among the minority of scholars who have engaged in *ta‘lil* in general, and in connection with acts of worship in particular – adopted this interpretation and built upon it. On this topic Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zanjānī (himself a Shāfi‘ī) writes,

Imam al-Shāfi‘ī was of the belief that zakah is a kind of financial provision¹⁸ which is due to the poor on the part of the wealthy by virtue of the brotherly bond of Islam, and in the form of assistance. As for the worship-related aspect of zakah, this is secondary, and was only affirmed by the Lawgiver as a means of motivating human beings to fulfill their obligation in this area. After all, human beings are naturally predisposed to be miserly and greedy, as a result of which they have been commanded to draw near to God by means of zakah, so that in their desire to receive a reward from God they will be encouraged to achieve the end for which zakah was legislated.¹⁹

And is there anyone who is unaware that the bases and objectives of the legal rulings pertaining to jihad and to commanding the doing of what is right and prohibiting the doing of what is wrong – all of which are considered to fall in the category of ‘acts of worship’ – have been clearly stated, and that they are virtually all accessible to reason? Indeed, al-Shātibī himself does not deny that the overall rationale and objectives of the various forms of worship in Islam are provided in the texts in which they are instituted; however, he main-

tains that for the most part, such explanations remain obscure in relation to their details. On this point he states, “It is a known fact that generally speaking, the various forms of worship have been established to benefit human beings in this world or in the next, although it may not be known how this works out in their details. Moreover, it is valid and acceptable on the whole for one to intend their effects,²⁰ both temporal and eternal.”²¹

Al-Shāṭibī’s use of the phrase, “in this world or in the next” is not an expression of doubt on his part as to whether the forms of worship offer temporal benefits to those who engage in them; rather, in so speaking he is simply making allowance for certain particulars or cases in which the temporal benefits to be experienced are not obvious and immediate. He deals, for example, with the objectives and legitimate benefits of ritual prayer, noting that their primary objective is to instill in the person who prays “a sense of humble reverence for God, Glory be to Him, by turning to Him in perfect sincerity, standing before Him in broken subservience and reminding oneself to keep Him constantly in remembrance.”²² Then, among the secondary objectives which have been explicitly stated for prayer,²³ al-Shāṭibī mentions “restraining the person who prays from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason, seeking refuge in prayer from the world’s afflictions, asking God by means of prayer to provide one’s daily sustenance and grant one success in one’s temporal pursuits, and asking for grace to attain Paradise, enter into God’s protection, and achieve the most exalted of [spiritual] stations.” Al-Shāṭibī then adds, “Other forms of worship likewise offer eternal benefits, which are the principle ones, as well as temporal benefits all of which are secondary to the primary [that is, eternal] benefit which they bring.”²⁴

Thus, the realm of worship and its various expressions is not closed to the practice of interest-based *ta‘līl*; on the contrary, there is more than one avenue by which *ta‘līl* can be practiced in this area. This may be observed in the fact that reasons are given for all the allowances mentioned in rulings pertaining to acts of worship. Al-Shāṭibī acknowledges this fact to some extent, but then hastens to change the subject! He observes that “the practice of identifying an

'appropriate' basis and purpose for [rulings relating to worship] is limited in scope and without parallel, such as [the alleviation of hardship] as the basis for allowing someone on a journey to shorten his prayers, join two consecutive prayers, break his fast and the like."²⁵

In relation to a type of ruling similar to that of allowances – namely, the prohibitions issued by the Prophet to one of his Companions against going to excess in certain forms of worship to the point of exhaustion and boredom – al-Shāṭibī offers an explicit, 'appropriate' explanation of its basis and objective, saying, "All of this may be explained in a manner which is fully comprehensible based on what is indicated by the foregoing, namely, the danger of succumbing to weariness, boredom, a sense of inadequacy and a hatred for obedience. If this is accurate, then the prohibition is consistent with its basis in the sense that if the basis exists, so will the prohibition, and if the basis is absent, the prohibition will likewise cease to exist."²⁶

With regard to the details of rites relating to ritual purity and rulings on the various types of water, we cannot overlook the fact that 'appropriateness' is the most apparent, most prevalent approach; nor can it be considered to have no parallel. An example of this (namely, the reasonableness and appropriateness of the rulings relating to ritual purity and impurity) may be seen in the rule formulated by al-Maqqarī, who stated, "That which is considered offensive in the realm of daily customs is likewise deemed objectionable in the realm of worship, such as vessels which appear to have been designed to hold impurities, performance of ritual prayer in a lavatory,²⁷ or doing ritual ablutions with water which has been used previously, since it might be likened to dirty wash water..."²⁸ If it were not for the preponderant practice of *ta'lil* in this connection, al-Maqqarī could not have stated this rule in such general terms. Moreover, even clearer than this is al-Juwainī's statement that, "Various groups of jurisprudents have stated the view that it is forbidden for someone to rub himself with impure substances unless there is an urgent need to do so,"²⁹ the reason for this being the incompatibility between such a practice and the *ta'lil* which follows the Qur'anic mention of minor and major ritual ablutions: "God does not want to impose any hard-

ship on you, but wants to make you pure..." (Qur'an, 5:6). Hence, explaining minor and major ritual ablutions as being for the purpose of purification is perfectly acceptable, even though this is not their only purpose.

Concerning the details of ritual prayer, we ask: Who could possibly fail to realize that prayer's set times and our obligation to observe these times are intended – among other things – to ensure that ritual prayer and its effects are foremost in our lives, from the moment we awaken till the moment we lie down to sleep? And who could fail to perceive the wise purposes behind communal prayer, the Friday prayer, and the prayers performed specially for *'Id al-Fiṭr* and *'Id al-Adḥā*? Similarly, the call to prayer (*al-adhān*) and the announcement of prayer's commencement (*al-iqāmah*) bespeak the purposes for which they were established, while the postures of prayer, including standing, bowing and prostration, are all unmistakable expressions of reverence for God and humble subservience in His presence. Moreover, given that of all these postures, prostration is the most expressive of these attitudes, the worshipper may be considered, while in this position, to be especially close to his Lord. As we read in a certain sound hadith, "Never is the servant nearer to his Lord than when he is in prostration; hence, offer many prayers of supplication [while in this posture]."³⁰ And as we are instructed by God Almighty, "Prostrate thyself [before God] and draw near [to Him]" (Qur'an, 96:19). Indeed, so vividly do the postures of bowing and prostration demonstrate the worshipper's lowliness and submission and his recognition of God's Greatness and Majesty that Imam al-Ghazālī affirms unequivocally, "As for bowing and prostration, they are intended without a doubt to glorify and magnify God."³¹

One need not go far in search of support for this perspective when al-Shāṭibī himself has provided us with more detailed explanations of such rulings. He says:

In the case of ritual prayer, for example, we observe that when it is preceded by the rites through which the worshipper enters a state of ritual purity, this signals preparation for an event of great moment.³² When the worshipper faces the *qiblah*, he is filled with an awareness of the

One to whom he is turning, and when he forms the intention to engage in worship, this gives rise to reverence and tranquillity. He then enters into the prayer proper by reciting a surah of the Qur'an in completion of the obligatory recitation of the *Fātiḥah*, since all of it is the speech of the Lord to whom he is directing himself. When he utters the words, 'Allāhu akbar,' words of praise to God, and the testimony of faith, all of this together serves to alert and awaken his heart lest he forget that he is engaged in intimate converse with his Lord and standing in His presence. And thus it is from beginning to end: If one begins with a voluntary prayer, this can serve to prepare one gradually to enter the spirit of worship and make oneself more 'present'; similarly, if one ends with a voluntary prayer, this has the potential of increasing one's attentiveness during the obligatory prayer which precedes it.

Still another thing to be taken into consideration is the fact that every single part of the prayer entails divine remembrance accompanied by action. In this way, one's tongue and all one's bodily members are harmonized in the pursuit of a single thing, namely, to be present with God throughout the prayer in an attitude of tranquility, adoration and surrender. Indeed, no part of the entire prayer is devoid of some word or action, lest [the absence of words or actions] be a door through which heedlessness can enter, and with it, Satan's evil insinuations.³³

In so saying, al-Shāṭibī is effecting a notable expansion by engaging in *ta'līl* in relation to the details of the one form of worship which, more than any other, calls for unquestioning submission. How, then, can it be said that 'appropriateness' in relation to Islamic forms of worship has no parallel or that the established approach in this realm is to refrain from *ta'līl*? There can be no doubt, of course, that we will encounter rulings having to do with the forms of worship which are difficult to trace to an obvious, readily understandable basis, and to which al-Ghazālī refers when he states that "the forms of worship are based on 'appeals,' by which we mean those things in which it is difficult for us to perceive the divine kindness. We believe that there is a hidden wisdom which underlies the fact that the number of *rak'ahs* for the dawn prayer has been set at two,

for the sundown prayer at three and for the late afternoon prayer at four.³⁴ That is to say, these set numbers of *rak'ahs* embody a form of kindness and blessing for human beings which is known to God alone. Hence, we do not seek to understand it;³⁵ rather, we content ourselves with drinking from the wellsprings He has provided."³⁶

But, which of the two is the predominant approach and which should we take as the rule, such that the other becomes the exception? Is the 'rule' that which has a comprehensible explanation, whose basis can be identified and whose wise purpose can be comprehended? Or is it that for which no wise purpose or benefit can be identified? We should bear in mind, of course, that the overall rule in connection with Islamic Law is to interpret it in light of its concern for human interests, as we have seen; hence, the question here pertains only to those rulings which have to do with forms of worship.

If we look at the jurisprudence of zakah, we will hardly find a single ruling in this area but that jurisprudents have approached it with some form of *ta'lil*. Hence, if one jurisprudent has not sought to interpret it in terms of its basis and wise purpose, some other jurisprudent has done so. All their interpretations are based clearly on consideration for human interests, in addition to which they have employed analogical deduction in their rulings despite the fact that they have to do with worship.³⁷ It is on this basis that Yusuf al-Qaradawi states:

The Prophet took the fast-breaking zakah from certain grains and fruits such as barley, dates and raisins. Hence, al-Shāfi'i, Ahmād and their followers concluded on the basis of analogical deduction that zakah may be taken from whatever serves as the basis for one's sustenance, the most commonly eaten food in a given region, or even the food eaten most commonly by a particular individual. In other words, they did not consider the types of food from which the Prophet had taken zakah to be intended for their own sake such that no other foods could serve as the basis for the fast-breaking zakah.

Similarly in regard to the zakah collected on agricultural produce and

fruits, the majority of imams have drawn analogies between many different types of grains and those specifically mentioned in the texts of Islamic Law. Consequently, they do not limit zakah to those substances mentioned in Prophetic hadiths, such as wheat, barley, dates and raisins. It is related concerning ‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] that he became the first person to apply analogical deduction to zakah when it became apparent to him that there were people who owned mares, one of which might be equal in value to one hundred she-camels. And he said, “Are we to collect zakah on forty ewes, and not collect any on horses?!” He was then followed in this practice by Abū Ḥanīfah with certain conditions.

This is what has led us to draw analogies between agricultural lands and buildings being used as rental property, as well as a multiplicity of other entities...³⁸

Ibn al-Qayyim in particular goes to great lengths to identify the bases and wise purposes of legal rulings, including those pertaining to acts of worship and those which, even though they pertain to daily transactions, cannot be traced through human reasoning to a particular purpose or human interest. For example, he offers explanations for why waterless ablutions are allowed as a substitute for regular ritual ablutions, why waterless ablutions involve wiping only two parts of the body, why cupping causes someone’s fasting to be invalidated, why the excretion of semen requires one to perform total ablutions whereas the excretion of urine requires only that one perform regular ablutions, why the passing of gas requires that one wash parts of the body which bear no relation to this event, as well as many other legal rulings of this sort and countless others having to do with daily transactions.³⁹

Due to his insistence on identifying a basis for every ruling, Ibn al-Qayyim offers a number of weak explanations, as, for example, his explanation of the difference between boys’ and girls’ urine,⁴⁰ or why ritual prayers performed by day are silent while those performed at night are spoken aloud.⁴¹ He acknowledges, in part, the position held by al-Shāṭibī and al-Ghazālī, saying that, “Generally

speaking, there are mysteries pertaining to the rulings on acts of worship which are known to the Lawgiver alone and which, although they might be grasped in a general sense, cannot be comprehended in detail.”⁴² Nevertheless Ibn al-Qayyim, unlike al-Shāṭibī, treats *ta‘lil* as the rule and refraining from it as the exception (in relation to rulings that pertain to acts of worship).

Ibn al-Qayyim’s perspective is thus in agreement with the general principle according to which Islamic Law is subject to interpretation based on its concern to preserve human interests regardless of the distinction between acts of worship and other areas of life. It is this principle which al-Shāṭibī has declared to be a universally accepted, uncontested given and which al-Maqqarī describes as being “the recognized approach to legal rulings – those which are comprehensible to human reason, that is, and not those whose meanings are inaccessible – since this is more acceptable and less likely to cause hardship.”⁴³ At the same time, Ibn al-Qayyim’s view supports the point which I myself have been seeking to convey, namely, that rulings on acts of worship which are accessible to human reason and whose bases and wise purposes are identifiable are quite numerous, and that there are very few of them for which it would be impossible to offer a clear explanation. Add to this the general principle referred to earlier, and it becomes even clearer that the approach which should be taken as the rule in relation to legal rulings – both those pertaining to daily transactions and those pertaining to the realm of worship – is that of *ta‘lil*, and that whatever departs from this approach should be taken as the exception.

Al-Juwaynī declares that legal rulings which lack any meaning accessible to human reason would be “very difficult to conceive of,”⁴⁴ which is consistent with passages from the Qur’ān which state explicitly that the entire Law and, indeed, the entire religion without exception may be interpreted in terms of its bases and wise purposes. God Almighty states, for example, “And [thus, O Prophet,] We have sent thee as [an evidence of Our] Grace towards all the worlds” (Qur’ān, 21:107). Commenting on this passage, al-‘Aḍd al-Ījī states, “The apparent sense of the verse is that it has general application. In other words, that it may be understood to mean that human beings’

interests are preserved in all legal rulings which have been issued for them. For if He sent down a ruling which brought them no benefit, this would not be a manifestation of grace, since it would be a pointless obligation which flies in the face of the universal sense [of these words].”⁴⁵

At the same time, however, legal rulings pertaining to worship and those which cannot be traced through human reasoning to a particular purpose or human interest contain numerous specifications, forms and quantifications, such as the number of ritual prayers to be performed, the number of *rak'ahs* in each prayer, whether a given prayer is to be performed silently or aloud, the fact that the fast is to last for a month, specification of the month in which the fast is to take place, the specification that fasting is to commence from dawn and not from sunrise, details relating to the pilgrimage, the specific requirements involved in acts of atonement, the types and degrees of punishments laid down in Islamic Law, etc. These specifications – or codifications, if you will – are urgent requirements of public life and order. In addition to the spirit of submission and devotion fostered by adherence to such rulings, they serve to achieve an observable benefit by ordering and facilitating life’s affairs and defining obligations and limits. Hence, for example, even if we acknowledge the wise purposes served by ritual purity and prayer in a general sense, there will still be a need to set down detailed procedures for people to follow, which will assist them in adhering to and preserving the required limits. Similarly, even if we acknowledge the overall wise purpose behind zakah, we will still need to specify quotas, percentages and the like in order for everyone to know what his right or obligation is. And after recognizing the wise purpose underlying the fast of Ramadan, we still need to define its limit and extent and specify when it will begin and when it will end in a manner which is suited to the majority of the population. Similarly, even when we have recognized the wise purpose, or purposes, behind the pilgrimage to Makkah, we will be obliged – in order to fulfill these wise purposes – to limit it to a specified period of time: “The pilgrimage shall take place in the months appointed for it” (Qur'an, 2:197), and “on the days appointed” (Qur'an, 22:28). In addition, it needs to be marked

by certain rites which enable people to maintain discipline and order since, left to their own devices, the pilgrims may become agitated and unruly and begin jostling and crowding one another like an untended herd of cattle. And similarly, if we accept the principle that transgressors and those who exceed proper bounds must be punished and deterred by force, the means by which this is to be done must be detailed and explained in order for people to be aware of what they are doing and the consequences to which this has led.

Were it not for codifications and controls such as these, our recognized pillars and foundations would be lost. They would be lost due to their ambiguity and also people's consequent confusion about them, disagreements, lack of cooperation⁴⁶ in appreciating and in enforcing them, and procrastination and delays resulting from an absence of set times at which to carry them out.

Al-Shātibī comes to our aid here once again with support for these explanations of 'that which cannot be explained,' saying:

Rulings which pertain to daily transactions and customs, as well as many rulings which pertain to the realm of worship, have a recognized purpose, namely, to regulate the various aspects of human interests, for if they were left open to different interpretations, they would remain undefined and be the cause of disagreements and divisions. As a consequence, they would no longer be subject to regulation or control and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to appeal to a [universally accepted] legal foundation. Precise definitions are more conducive to submission if it is possible to provide them. Consequently, the Lawgiver has specified the limits set by the Law in terms of recognized quantities, such as the eighty lashes to be delivered as punishment for falsely accusing someone of unchastity (*qadhf*), the one hundred lashes and one year of exile for an unmarried person guilty of sexual misconduct, specifying the full entry of the glans [in the vagina] as a criterion for a number of rulings, the use of months as opposed to the number of menstrual periods when calculating a woman's waiting period [following divorce or the death of her husband], specifying the minimum amount of wealth on which zakah is due and stipulating that such wealth must be in one's possession for an entire year before zakah is due on it, etc. As

for those things which are not subject to precise specification, they are left to the individual's conscience.⁴⁷

Such specifications and criteria help to guide jurisprudents engaged in independent reasoning for the purpose of arriving at a legal decision, and by rulers in their codifications. In fact, they are relied upon by lay people themselves in the form of customs and traditions which they respect and adhere to, since they regulate their transactions in this or that area of life. For what is recognized as customary – like that which is stipulated as a condition and, indeed, that which is legitimized through law – (is valid) so long as it does not come in conflict with the objectives of the Law and the rulings derived from it.

Hence, precise definition, codification and specification are a recognized benefit which most people stand in need of. And this, in turn, is a reasonable, appropriate basis for the explanation of many legal rulings. This is not to deny the aspect of these same rulings which calls for unquestioning devotion and submission; on the contrary, *ta'lil* does not, generally speaking, preclude this aspect of any of the Law's precepts. This is why some have said that no legal ruling – whether its bases and wise purposes are easily identifiable or not, and whether it pertains to the realm of worship or some other area of life – is devoid of the aspect of devotion and submission (God's right over us).⁴⁸ In fact, it may be said that a devoted, submissive response to the rulings of the Law is itself one aspect of the interest-based *ta'lil* which applies to every ruling to one extent or another. After all, every ruling which instructs and trains people in submission to the Law and reverence for God is of benefit.

As will be seen in the next section, al-Shāṭibī states that Islamic Law is comprised of both a particular and a universal aspect, and that the universal interest served by the Law is "for every human being to be answerable to some specific precept of the Law in all of his movements, words and beliefs..."⁴⁹ Add to this principle our faith that every ruling has its own particular basis and wise purpose whether we are aware of them or not. As was stated earlier by al-Ghazālī, "every ruling has an underlying wisdom and embodies a

form of kindness and blessing for human beings.” Also in the words of al-Ghazālī, “It is as though people’s minds are naturally disposed to see a meaning in every ruling. Our inability to discern the ‘illah behind certain rulings obliges us to attribute them simply to the divine prerogative; however, if there is some [interest-related] aspect [to a given ruling] – excluding those aspects which are weak and obscure – it should be explained on the basis thereof.”⁵⁰

As many will be aware, *ta‘lil* has its own methods and laws which must be adhered to in the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. No one is free to base *ta‘lil* on personal preference or conjecture, nor does anyone have the right to lend authority to his own opinions and illusions when dealing with God’s Law, since this would be tantamount to making unfounded claims about God and attributing to Him objectives which He has not attributed to Himself. Al-Maqqarī, who was quoted earlier as saying that the established approach to legal rulings is to treat them as having comprehensible bases and purposes, offers the following summary of the proper attitude toward the practice of *ta‘lil*:

Overdone attempts to ascertain the wise purposes for the sake of which the Law has been established – as opposed to the derivation of the bases for its rulings and the precise definition of their outward indications or associated conditions – is not to be considered the essence of knowledge, but rather, a mere pastime which passes for scholarship. One should not go to excess in seeking to dig up wise purposes, particularly in relation to rulings which appear to fall in the category of *ta‘abbud*,* since there is no guarantee that in so doing, one will not fall into danger and error. Hence, the jurisprudent should content himself with what is explicitly stated in the text, its most apparent meaning, or whatever most closely approaches its apparent meaning. One should not say, for example,⁵¹ “Noon is the time when one reverts to one’s habits,⁵² as a result of which one is commanded to commence this part of the day with worship. Mid-afternoon is the time when people go back into the workplace to seek their earthly sustenance, as a result of which they are told, ‘Stock up before this on sustenance for the life to come.’ And sundown is the time when people once again repair to their homes and their daily habits...”⁵³

Those who Reject the Practice of *Ta‘līl*

As we have indicated earlier, it may be understood from al-Shāṭibī’s aforementioned introduction that there has been disagreement over the matter of *ta‘līl* in relation to Islamic Law, that is, over whether and when it is possible and/or legitimate to identify the bases and wise purposes behind Islamic legal rulings. Indeed, he makes explicit mention of the fact that there has been disagreement over this issue “in scholastic theology,” and that al-Rāzī held the view that neither divine precepts nor divine actions may be explained in light of their logical bases or a concern for human interests. Given his mention of the fact that the Mu‘talizites supported the practice of *ta‘līl* along with the majority of later jurisprudents, al-Shāṭibī seems to allude to the existence of others who objected to the use of *ta‘līl*. In other words, he seems to be suggesting that scholars other than the Mu‘tazilites – including both earlier thinkers and a number of later thinkers as well – disagreed with them on this point.

As we have seen, however, al-Shāṭibī himself views the validity of *ta‘līl* as virtually axiomatic; and, indeed, it is, as we have sought to make clear in the preceding pages.

*Who, Then, are Those who Deny the Validity of *Ta‘līl*? And on What do They Base this Denial?*

Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zanjānī notes that “al-Shāfi‘ī and most of the orthodox sunni scholars,” were of the conviction that one should not seek to interpret Islamic Law in terms of its preservation of human interests, since in their view, legal rulings “have been established by God at His own discretion and without a basis or purpose accessible to human reason.” According to this perspective, “whatever connection such rulings bear to human interests is implicit, secondary and incidental, not explicit, primary or deliberate.” Al-Zanjānī excludes from this group the Ḥanafite scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* according to whom all legal rulings “have been established and legislated by God with clearly comprehensible bases in human interests.”⁵⁴

Al-Zanjānī, who writes in the area of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, attributes this stance (i.e., the stance against engaging in

ta'lil) to Imam al-Shāfi'i and to “the majority of the orthodox sunni scholars” without presenting a shred of evidence for this unqualified generalization. He does, it must be admitted, quote certain derivative rulings for which Abū Hanifah offered explanations and for which al-Shāfi'i did not. However, this in no wise demonstrates that al-Shāfi'i denied the validity of *ta'lil* entirely, particularly given that he attributes this denial to “the majority of the orthodox sunni scholars”! In fact, al-Zanjānī presents evidence which disproves his own claim; for as we have seen, he attributes to al-Shāfi'i a clear instance of interest-based *ta'lil* of legal rulings pertaining to zakah, including the statement that the worship-related aspect of zakah is subordinate to the other purposes for which it was legislated.⁵⁵ As for al-Zanjānī's claim that “the majority of the orthodox sunni scholars” deny the validity of *ta'lil*, he embroils himself even further in the realm of unfounded allegations, evidence of which will be presented below.

Turning to Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, we find that he is more accurate in his assessment of the situation. He states, “The most widely accepted view among scholastic theologians is that the bases and purposes of the divine precepts cannot be identified – in other words, that *ta'lil* is neither possible nor valid – whereas the most widely accepted view among jurisprudents is to the contrary, namely, that *ta'lil* is both possible and valid.”⁵⁶ As for Ibn al-Najjār al-Hanbali, he speaks in greater detail and with more precision than either al-Zanjānī or al-Subkī. Nevertheless, he still fails to overcome the ambiguity and confusion which surrounds the question. He states,

According to a number of our fellow thinkers, as well as some Malikites and Shafi'ites, neither God's actions nor His commands have a basis or a wise purpose; this view is likewise held by the Zahirites, the Ash'arites and the Jahmites.⁵⁷ As for the other view, namely, that both God's actions and His commands have a basis and a wise purpose, it is held by al-Ṭūfī, Taqī al-Dīn, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Ibn Qādī al-Jabal. Based on a consensus of the pious ancestors, this view is held by the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites. According to Taqī al-Dīn, the orthodox sunni scholars are divided in their views on *ta'lil* as it relates to God's actions and commands, with the majority of them favoring *ta'lil*.⁵⁸

The fact is that as al-Shāṭibī has stated, this issue was the subject of disagreement among scholastic theologians, after which the controversy and its effects shifted to the realm of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, especially given that a number of the major scholastic theologians wrote in the area of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. In other words, they were both scholastic theologians and *uṣūl* scholars. However, if we leave aside scholastic theology and its particular battles and effects, we will find nothing but support for *ta‘līl* and its practical application in the areas of both jurisprudence and its fundamentals. Moreover, as we go back in time, the influence of scholastic theology over jurisprudence and its fundamentals dwindle progressively and, as a consequence, we find the practice of *ta‘līl* to be a ‘given,’ or, as al-Shāṭibī terms it, ‘incontestable.’ Accordingly, we find that Islamic Law is looked upon as a source of mercy, goodness, blessing, justice and cleansing; there is no good but that Islamic Law has pointed the way to it, and no evil but that it has issued prohibitions against it and closed off the avenues that lead to it, since this, after all, is its purpose and foundation.

Ta‘līl, or the identification of legal rulings’ bases and wise purposes, is the approach followed in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, from which Ibn al-Qayyim cites scores of relevant examples.⁵⁹ In his book *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*, he states, “The Qur'an and the Sunnah are filled with examples of the wise purposes and interests served by legal rulings, references to the various aspects of such wise purposes and interests and interpretation of creation in light thereof, as well as the various aspects of the wise purposes for the sake of which these rulings were legislated and for the sake of which essences were created. Now, if the Qur'an and the Sunnah contained one or two hundred passages of this nature, we would quote them here. However, they come to more than one thousand passages of various types.”⁶⁰ He then proceeds to point out the numerous forms of *ta‘līl* which are employed in the Qur'an.

The Prophet's Companions engaged in *ta‘līl* based on their sound intuition and with unaffected, unarguable spontaneity, basing their independent interpretations on what they understood to be the bases and objectives of the Law. They were succeeded on this exemplary path by the followers, and then by the imams who in turn inspired

others with their authority. Then people were afflicted with scholastic theology, which brought with it complication, disagreements and strife. Based on his compilation of numerous instances of the pious ancestors' *ta'lil* and interpretations based on them,⁶¹ Muhammad Mustafa Shalabi discusses the dispute which emerged over this question based on "the aforementioned presentation of the texts from both the Qur'an and the Sunnah which illustrate the practice of *ta'lil*, as well as the method adopted by the Companions, their followers and their followers' followers without the slightest indication of disagreement or contention among them. This phenomenon serves as irrefutable evidence that the divine precepts may indeed be interpreted in light of their preservation of human interests. Moreover, there was complete, or nearly complete, consensus concerning this truth until the arrival of those who found reasons to quarrel about it."⁶²

Shalabi's hesitation as to whether the consensus among early scholars concerning the matter of *ta'lil* was "complete, or nearly complete," is countered by a number of other scholars who affirm unequivocally that the consensus was indeed complete. One such scholar is al-Āmidī – a Shafi'iite scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and a scholastic theologian. According to al-Āmidī, no legal ruling in Islam may be said to have no basis ('illah), since "this runs counter to jurisprudents' consensus" on this matter.⁶³ Al-Āmidī affirms elsewhere as well that, "Leading jurisprudents are in full agreement that no divine precept is devoid of a wise purpose and an objective."⁶⁴

Ibn al-Hājib makes a similar declaration, saying, "The rulings of the Law were established in order to preserve human interests, as evidenced by the consensus of the imams."⁶⁵ Similarly, al-Maqqarī quotes Ashhab as saying that "those who engage in analogical deduction unanimously support *ta'lil* even though they may disagree on exactly what the 'illah, or basis, of a given ruling happens to be."⁶⁶ And al-Shāṭibī himself, having mentioned, both implicitly and explicitly, the existence of those who disagree concerning the matter or *ta'lil*, states clearly, albeit with some reservation, that there is consensus on the same question. He writes, "There is, overall, consensus concerning the fact that the Lawgiver's objective in holding human beings accountable before the Law is to serve human interests."⁶⁷

He also states, “It is an agreed-upon assertion that the Lawgiver has established the Law based on a consideration for human interests.”⁶⁸

Shāh Wali Allāh al-Dahlawī criticizes those who deny the validity of *ta‘līl*, castigating them for their view that Islamic Law is (based on) nothing but (arbitrary) choice and the requirement that one submit to it in unquestioning devotion without concern for human interests. This view he says “is a baseless belief which is belied by the Sunnah and the consensus of successive, well-attested generations.”⁶⁹ It is true, of course, that the consensus being spoken of in these quotations refers, first, to the census of the pious ancestors and, secondly, to that of scholars of jurisprudence and its fundamentals. However, this in no way undermines its value; on the contrary, it increases it, since it was the consensus of our exemplary Muslim forebears, and following them, of those with specialized knowledge of the Islamic faith. It follows, then, that if, at a late date in relation to this consensus, some scholastic theologians broke this unanimity, it is not thereby invalidated. On the contrary, the original consensus invalidates the contentious theories and claims which were introduced subsequently.

In his book *al-Minhāj*, al-Bayḍāwī’s states that, “An inductive reading of the Law provides evidence of the fact that God Almighty, in His bounty and goodness, has laid down His precepts for the benefit of human beings.” In a criticism⁷⁰ of al-Bayḍāwī’s statement, Ibn al-Subkī says, “Some have claimed that there is unanimous agreement that the divine precepts were set down for human beings’ benefit. However, this claim is false, because the scholastic theologians do not support *ta‘līl* – that is, the interpretation of legal rulings in light of their concern for human interests – either as an obligation or even as a permissible practice.”⁷¹

At this juncture we may pause to ask: Why did the scholastic theologians, or more properly speaking, some of them, deny the validity of *ta‘līl*? And what evidence did they put forward in support of this denial? Although I do not consider the scholastic theologians’ position on this matter to be of great significance to our topic, particularly given all that I have presented in support of the validity and intuitive acceptability of *ta‘līl*, I wish, nevertheless, to consider this

question briefly in order to “settle the issue,” and to clear away any remaining doubts or uncertainties in order that the matter might be, as al-Shātibī puts it, “incontestable.”

To begin with, let us complete the quote begun earlier from Ibn al-Subkī, a denier of the validity of *ta‘līl*. He states,

...the scholastic theologians do not support *ta‘līl* – that is, the interpretation of legal rulings in light of their preservation of human interests – either as an obligation or even as a permissible practice. Indeed, this is the position which is most in keeping with their principles. They have stated that it is not permissible to interpret God’s actions in light of some basis or purpose, since when someone performs an action for a given purpose, the performance of the action, with respect to the actor, is most important, whether the purpose of the action had to do with the actor himself or with someone else. If so, this means that the actor is incomplete in himself and seeks completion through some other entity. But sublimely exalted is God, Glory be to Him, above any such thing.⁷²

This, then, is the ‘evidence’ which was reiterated by Ash‘arite scholastic theologians whenever mention was made of their denial of the validity of *ta‘līl*. However, this logic of theirs was subjected to criticism by many scholars and was thoroughly refuted. Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur states,

The upshot is that the evidence with which they support their position consists of two invalid premises. The first of these is their claim that if an action is performed for a purpose, the actor must therefore be in need of completion through the fulfillment of said purpose. This, however, is a fallacy in that a purpose which is beneficial to the actor is equated with the purpose of someone who calls [others] to action and who is acting, not out of incompleteness but, rather, in a manner consistent with his own perfection – a perfection, moreover, which is not dependent on his action. As for the second premise, it is their claim that if an action is performed for a purpose, then the purpose is a cause, which necessitates the actor’s inadequacy. This is likewise a fallacy, however, because a cause which serves as a motivator is being equated

with a cause whose existence necessitates existence, and whose non-existence necessitates non-existence. For both of these are causes, [but of different sorts]...⁷³

Another thinker who disputed with those who reject the validity of *ta‘līl* was the Ḥanafite *uṣūl* scholar Ibn al-Humām al-Iskandarī, who argued that whatever may be said concerning the blessings which God has bestowed upon His servants applies likewise to the rulings which He has legislated for them. Hence, if God, Glory be to Him, has bestowed His blessings upon us – including the act of creating us, proportioning us and the world we live in, and granting us health and daily sustenance – for our benefit, it follows that He has likewise legislated His precepts for our benefit. Thus, whatever is said about one applies equally to the other, without distinction.⁷⁴

Still another Ḥanafite scholar who responded forcefully to scholastic theologians' polemical logic was al-Qādī ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, also known as *ṣadr al-Shari‘ah* (champion of the Law), who wrote,

What a far cry from the truth is the claim of those who say that it [the Law] cannot be understood in terms of its basis or purpose. The prophets – upon them be blessings and peace – were sent in order to guide people, and they were granted the ability to work miracles in order for people to believe their message. Hence, whoever denies the validity of *ta‘līl* denies the validity of prophethood and the truth of God's words, “I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me”⁷⁵ (Qur’ān, 51:56), and “they have been commanded no more than this: to worship God” (Qur’ān, 98:5). There are, in addition, many other such passages from the Qur’ān which support what we have said. Besides, if God did not act with purpose, it would necessitate a universe without meaning.⁷⁶

But, if the validity of *ta‘līl* is this obvious and well established, then what is to explain this major disagreement between those who affirm its validity and those who deny it? A perplexing question,

indeed. And the answer to it, whatever it happens to be, is distressing, since it is bound to reveal one or more aspects of the confusion which had found its way into scholastic thought and reasoning. So profound was this confusion that the axioms attested to repeatedly by countless texts in the Islamic heritage and concerning which early thinkers had been in unanimous agreement, had now come to be the focus of a prolonged controversy among both scholastic theologians and scholastic scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

A number of scholars have concerned themselves with this ‘contradiction’ and have worked to resolve it or, at the very least, to explain it. One of these scholars was Ibn al-Subkī (‘Abd al-Wahhāb), who proposed a ‘way out’ which he had received from his father (‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Kāfi). He states,

My father, the shaykh and imam (may God have mercy on him and give him length of days) continued to encounter difficulty in reconciling their conflicting claims⁷⁷ until he came up with a singular solution. In a witty summarization of the issue entitled, *Wird al-‘Alal fi Fahm al-‘Ilal*, he states, “There is actually no contradiction between the two positions, since what is meant [by jurisprudents and those who support *ta‘lil* in general] is that the ‘illah is what moves a person to act; the necessity of preserving human life, for example, is a ‘illah which leads to application of the law of retribution, and this is a human action which is ruled on by the Law. Thus, the legal ruling itself has no basis, or ‘illah, and nothing which gives rise to it.”⁷⁸

It is plain to see, however, that this ‘reconciliation’ of opposing viewpoints is actually nothing more than an affirmation of the rejection of *ta‘lil*. And in fact, it is a dodging of the issue at hand, since people speak of *ta‘lil* not in relation to human beings’ actions but, rather, in relation to the rulings issued by the Lawgiver. Hence, this interpretation of *ta‘lil* appears to have been proposed more in jest than in seriousness. Noting this phenomenon in his commentary, al-Āṭṭār states, “What the author of *Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘* says [here] is a meaningless invention of his father’s, since the motivation to action [with which *ta‘lil* concerns itself] is what moves the Lawgiver to issue

rulings, not what moves the human being to action..."⁷⁹

As for Ibn al-Humām (al-Ḥanafī), he seeks to bridge the gap between the two camps by saying, "The most accurate view would seem to be that the dispute is really just a matter of terminology, having to do with the definition of the term 'objective' (*gharad*). Those who use the term to mean that which will bring benefit to the party who performs the action say that *ta'lil* may not be applied to God's words and actions, and in fact, this position is beyond dispute, while those who use the term to mean that which will bring benefit to human beings say that *ta'lil* may, in fact, be applied to God's words and actions, a position which is likewise beyond dispute."⁸⁰ However, this reconciliation of opposing viewpoints loses its value when we find that some insist on rejecting *ta'lil* even when the term 'objective' is understood to mean that which will bring benefit to human beings.

Ibn Ashur inclines slightly toward this same solution, saying, "There is among scholastic theologians a disagreement over this issue which appears to be a mere matter of terminology. After all, all Muslims agree that God's actions arise out of free will and choice and in accordance with His knowledge, and that all of them are based on wise purposes and human interests. Hence, the dispute has to do with whether or not these wise purposes and interests are to be described as 'objectives' (*aghraḍ*) and purposeful bases ('ilal ghā'i-yah)."⁸¹ In addition, Ibn Ashur draws attention to a matter which may constitute the actual reason behind this peculiar denial of the validity of *ta'lil* in relation to God's precepts and actions. Specifically, he notes that those who reject *ta'lil* have felt themselves obliged to reject it in order to escape the logical consequences of Mu'tazilite claims that support for *ta'lil* requires one also to say that God is obliged, as it were, to demonstrate the greatest possible 'kindness' (*ṣalāḥ* or *lutf*)⁸² to His servants.⁸³

Although Muhammad Said al-Buti proposes another solution, his explanation of the conflict likewise confirms that it is an outgrowth of the long-standing controversy between the Mu'tazilites and philosophers on one hand, and the Ash'arites on the other. According to al-Buti, the *ta'lil* spoken of by scholastic theologians is not the same

as the *ta‘līl* spoken of by jurisprudents and scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*; consequently, he says, the *ta‘līl* whose validity is denied by the former group differs from the *ta‘līl* whose validity is affirmed by the latter. He states,

The ‘illah, that is, basis or cause, referred to in scholastic theology is the type spoken of by philosophers, namely, that which necessitates a particular effect. And it would most certainly not be acceptable to attribute causes (*‘ilal*), understood in this sense, to God’s actions. However, what the orthodox sunni scholars are referring to when they speak of a ‘illah as the basis for divine precepts is a kind of intermediary cause or basis (*‘illah ja‘liyyah*), since God has caused it to necessitate a particular ruling.⁸⁴

This explanation is undermined, however, by the fact that as we have seen, there are some – such as al-Subkī and Ibn al-Subkī, for example – who also deny the validity of *ta‘līl* in relation to legal rulings, a view which they make mention of in their discussions of analogical deduction. Be that as it may, al-Buti’s observation serves, at the very least, to explain one aspect of the issue and to shed light on some of the background factors which have contributed to it.

As for Mustafa Shalabi, he has accused scholastic *uṣūl* scholars of departing from the method established and universally agreed upon by the pious ancestors, namely, that of *ta‘līl*. According to Shalabi, such scholars contradict themselves by denying the validity of *ta‘līl* in the realm of scholastic theology and affirming it in the realm of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, or the fundamentals of jurisprudence, since analogical deduction is founded upon it.⁸⁵

Al-Rāzī’s Stance on *Ta‘līl*

I have chosen to devote this section to a discussion of Imam al-Rāzī for the following reasons:

1. In his discussion of *ta‘līl*, al-Shāṭibī singles out al-Rāzī alone for mention, and attributes to al-Rāzī alone a complete rejection of

- the practice – a fact which calls for contemplation and investigation.
2. Certain other writers have followed al-Shāṭibī's lead in this attribution to al-Rāzī.⁸⁶
 3. Al-Rāzī was one of the most prominent scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and his book *al-Maḥṣūl* became the focal point for scores and scores of *uṣūl*-related works written in succeeding years.

Before presenting al-Rāzī's position, it should be recalled that in his introduction to *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid* al-Shāṭibī states, “Al-Rāzī claimed that neither divine precepts nor divine actions may be explained in light of their logical bases or a concern for human interests.” He then says, “Based on an inductive reading of Islamic Law, we have concluded that it was established for the sake of human interests, and this conclusion cannot be contested by al-Rāzī or anyone else.” Hence, al-Shāṭibī names no one but al-Rāzī among those who deny the validity of *ta‘līl*. Not only this, but he claims that al-Rāzī's rejection of *ta‘līl* is absolute, including both God's actions and His precepts.

Now, for al-Rāzī to have rejected *ta‘līl* in his writings on scholastic theology based on the philosophical understanding thereof is one thing. After all, this is the stance which was taken by most Ash‘arites in their confrontations with philosophers and Mu‘tazilites, and in this there is nothing surprising. What is surprising, however, is for this rejection to be attributed to al-Rāzī alone, since he was not alone among Ash‘arites in taking this stance. On the contrary, when he defended the rejection of *ta‘līl* – as related to God's actions, but not in relation to God's precepts – he spoke in the name of ‘the companions,’ that is, his fellow Ash‘arites. Thus, for example, in explaining God's declaration that, “He it is who has created for you all that is on earth...” (Qur'an, 2:29), al-Rāzī writes, “Our companions maintain that God, Glorious and Exalted is He, performs no action with an objective (*li għarad*), for if this were the case, it would mean that He sought completion through the fulfillment of said objective, and whoever seeks completion through something other than himself

is incomplete in himself, which is unthinkable of God Almighty.”⁸⁷ In addition, he presents the other standard Ash‘arite arguments⁸⁸ against *ta‘lil*, the same ones that Ibn Ashur described earlier as being invalid.

What concerns us in this context is al-Rāzī’s position on *ta‘lil* in the realm of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, namely, interpreting legal rulings in terms of their bases and the preservation of human interests in a manner which implies no coercion of God, Glory be to Him, or necessity pertaining to His will. Al-Rāzī’s position on *ta‘lil* must be taken primarily from his writings on the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and specifically, in his own *uṣūl*-related field. For al-Rāzī was one who engaged in *qiyās*, or analogical deduction, and there is no such thing as analogical deduction without *ta‘lil* since in both theory and practice *qiyās* revolves around the determination of the basis, or ‘illah, of both the case which is taken as the basis for the analogy, and the case which is being compared to it.

Al-Rāzī’s position on *ta‘lil* emerges most clearly in his writings on the methods by which the ‘illah of a given ruling may be determined and, most particularly, on ‘the appropriateness method’ (*maslak al-munāsabah*),⁸⁹ which he treats in *al-Maḥṣūl*, his encyclopedia of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. He states,

The appropriateness [method] points to the most probable basis [for the ruling concerned], and it is this which should be adopted. The clarification of the first consists of two aspects: The first of these two aspects consists of three premises, namely, that: (1) God Almighty has established the Law’s rulings for the benefit of human beings. (2) Such-and-such is a benefit. (3) It may be considered most likely that God established this ruling for the sake of this benefit. These three premises must be demonstrated with evidence. As for the first premise,⁹⁰ the evidence in its favor is as follows:

One: That God Almighty has specified a particular ruling for a particular event, either with or without considerations in its favor. Now, it is invalid to say “without considerations in its favor,” since otherwise,

preference would have to be given to one ruling over another without evidence to support such a preference, which is unthinkable. Hence, every ruling must have considerations in its favor. Moreover, the considerations in favor of any given ruling will pertain either to God or to human beings; however, all Muslims would agree unanimously that the first possibility is invalid, which leaves only the second. Now, the considerations which pertain to human beings will have to do with either a benefit, a source of harm, or something which brings neither benefit nor harm. Of these three possibilities, all sensible people would agree that the second and third are invalid, leaving only the first. It is thus established that God Almighty has established the Law's rulings for the benefit of human beings.

Two: It is universally agreed upon among Muslims that God is All-Wise, and that the All-Wise would never perform any action which was not for the sake of some benefit. Indeed, anyone who acts without regard for what will bring benefit is foolish, and foolishness – based on the written texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the consensus of the Muslim community and the testimony of sound reason – would be impossible for God Almighty. It is thus clear that God Almighty established the precepts of Islamic Law for the benefit of human beings.

*Five:*⁹¹ The texts [from the Qur'an and the Sunnah] which serve as evidence that the objective of the Law is to achieve benefit for human beings and to protect them from harm include the following: "And [thus, O Prophet,] We have sent thee as [an evidence of Our] Grace towards all the worlds" (21:107); "He it is who has created for you all that is on earth..." (2:29); "And He has made subservient to you, [as a gift] from Himself, all that is in the heavens and on earth: in this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!" (45:13); and "[He] has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion" (22:78). Similarly, the Messenger of God declared, "I have been sent with the true, moderate, tolerant [religion]," and, "[The believer] causes no harm either to himself or to others."

Six: God has described Himself as All-Merciful and Gracious, saying,

“My Grace overspreads everything” (Qur'an, 7:156). However, if He legislated that which is not for human beings' benefit, this would not be an expression of mercy or grace.

These six points, then, serve to show that God Almighty has laid down the precepts of the Law for no purpose other than to serve human beings' interests.⁹²

This, then, is al-Rāzī's position on the interpretation of Islamic Law in terms of its concern for human interests. Indeed, it is a position in clear, powerful support of *ta‘lil*, and which he defends with greater enthusiasm and detail than al-Shāṭibī himself.

After the passage quoted above, al-Rāzī continues with his defense of *ta‘lil*, marshaling evidence both rational and textual to refute any objections which might be raised against it. He concludes by saying, “There is unanimous agreement that the divinely revealed laws concern themselves with human interests, either as a matter of necessity as the Mu‘tazilites claim, or as a manifestation of God’s bounty and goodness, as we claim.”⁹³ So keen, in fact, is al-Rāzī’s enthusiasm to uphold *ta‘lil* that he borders on being a Mu‘tazilite himself. In the course of arguing in favor of God’s concern for human interests, al-Rāzī appeals to the fact that God has created human beings in order to worship and serve Him. “It follows, then,” he states, “that by guarding their interests, God must deprive them [human beings] of any excuse [not to serve and worship Him].”⁹⁴

In another, clearer reference to the Mu‘tazilites’ position, al-Rāzī writes,

As for the Mu‘tazilites, they have brought this fact to light and stated it explicitly by saying that it would be unthinkable for God Almighty to engage in that which is shameful or to act frivolously. On the contrary, God’s actions must be for the sake of a benefit [*maṣlahah*] and an objective [*gharad*]. Jurisprudents, by contrast, declare that God has established this or that precept with a given meaning [*ma‘nā*] and for this or that wise purpose [*ḥikmah*]; but if they so much as hear someone utter the word *gharad*, they declare him an infidel, and this despite the fact

that the terms which they use themselves refer, in essence, to the same reality, that is, to an ‘objective’ [*gharad*.⁹⁵

Is it justifiable to attribute an utter rejection of *ta‘lil* to one who espouses views such as these? And does it make any sense to classify him together with the Zahirites? The fact is that those who malign al-Rāzī for having been influenced by the Mu‘tazilites would have been more justified in their words were it not for God Almighty’s saying, “And neither shall you defame one another, nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets” (Qur’ān, 49:11). In other words, we are only to refer to people in ways of which they themselves would approve, or with epithets which they would apply to themselves.

Al-Rāzī expounds his position on *ta‘lil* not only in *al-Maḥṣūl*, but in a number of his other writings as well. In *Munāẓarāt al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, for example, he explains why scholars who engage in *qiyyās*, or analogical deduction, base *ta‘lil* on outward conditions and indications rather than on the ruling’s wise purpose, the benefit it is intended to achieve, or the harm it is intended to prevent. He states, “It is permissible to base *ta‘lil* on outward conditions because such outward conditions or indications point to the benefit or harm concerned. Hence, the actual determinant of the ruling is the concern for these interests. As for outward conditions or signs, they do not, in fact, determine rulings but, rather, serve as evidence of the benefits or sources of harm [with which the rulings are concerned], and this is why it is permissible to use them as the basis for *ta‘lil*.⁹⁶ From this it may be seen that the influence exerted on legal rulings by benefits and sources of harm is a genuine, essential, underived influence, whereas the influence exerted by outward conditions or circumstances is symbolic, accidental, and derived....” He then continues, “As for the assertion that *ta‘lil* may legitimately be based on interest-related outward circumstances or conditions, this is agreed upon by all those endowed with discernment and understanding.”⁹⁷

It is thus quite clear that in al-Rāzī’s view, benefits and sources of harm are the true basis for the establishment of legal rulings. However, in view of the fact that in many cases, sources of benefit and

harm are not observable, measurable phenomena, as it were, rulings are based instead on visible, perceptible causes and indications which tend to be associated with the source of benefit or harm which is the focus of the ruling in question. It is for this reason that scholars of jurisprudence and its fundamentals prefer to employ visible, measurable conditions, signs or circumstances as the basis for legal rulings rather than basing them directly on the source of benefit or harm with which they are concerned, particularly if it is not visible or is difficult to observe or quantify.

It is in light of the foregoing that we must understand the statement made by Shalabi in the context of al-Rāzī's (supposed) rejection of *ta'līl*, according to which, "In his discussion of 'appropriateness,' al-Isnawī quotes al-Rāzī as saying that, 'It is not acceptable to interpret legal rulings based on sources of benefit and harm.'"⁹⁸ If we find al-Rāzī forbidding the interpretation of legal rulings based on sources of benefit and harm, this is not because he holds that divine precepts cannot be traced, in their essence, to the achievement of benefit and the prevention of harm but, rather, because of the impossibility of subjecting such realities to precise measurement. For as we have seen, al-Rāzī states unequivocally that he considers the achievement of benefit and the prevention of harm to be the actual, original basis, or *'illah*, for any given ruling.

However, although al-Rāzī chooses in *al-Munāzarāt* to prohibit the practice of linking legal rulings directly to the achievement of benefit or the prevention of harm during the process of analogical deduction, he leans in *al-Maḥṣūl* toward allowing it. After touching upon the dispute over whether to link legal rulings directly with the ruling's intent or wise purpose (*hikmah*) – to achieve such-and-such a benefit or prevent such-and-such a kind of harm – al-Rāzī states, "There is more evidence in favor of allowing it,"⁹⁹ after which he defends his position in detail.¹⁰⁰

In any case, this is not the central issue here. Rather, the central issue is the fact that the basis for divine precepts is the preservation of human interests. It is hoped, however, that this digression will help to clear away any confusion which may have arisen concerning statements made by al-Rāzī and his firm, even enthusiastic position

in defense of *ta‘līl* in relation to Islamic Law. Further confirmation of the fact that this is, indeed, al-Rāzī’s position – if further confirmation is needed – may be found in a statement by the practitioner of *ta‘līl* par excellence – namely, Ibn al-Qayyim – in the context of his response to those who deny the validity of both *ta‘līl* and *qiyās*. After making a masterful presentation of their arguments – or, more accurately speaking, their sophisms – Ibn al-Qayyim writes, “The replies offered by *uṣūl* scholars have differed based on their various understandings and degrees of awareness of the secrets of the Law. Ibn al-Khaṭīb,¹⁰¹ for example, replies by saying that, ‘Most legal rulings in Islamic Law have their basis in concern for known human interests.’ Dispute arises only in relation to the very rare cases which depart from this general rule. However, the occurrence of such exceptional cases does not diminish the possibility of arriving at reasonable certainty,¹⁰² just as, if storm clouds fail on some rare occasion to yield rain, this need not cast doubt on whether they tend to yield rain as a general rule.”¹⁰³

Who, then, remains of those who reject the practice of *ta‘līl*? As we have seen, al-Shāṭibī considers its validity to be beyond dispute. We have also seen how many Muslim scholars consider there to be unanimous support for *ta‘līl*. We have observed the true nature and value of what some Ash‘arite scholastic theologians have had to say on the matter of ‘the denial of *ta‘līl*.’ We have, in addition, become acquainted with the position of one such scholar, namely, Imam Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, of whom it became widely believed that he denied the validity of *ta‘līl*.

Who, then, specifically, would deny that Islamic Law came in order to preserve human interests? The fact is that after extensive research and investigation, I am aware of no one but the Zahirites. It is the Zahirites who reject *ta‘līl* both in theory and in practice, and in all of its aspects. It is they who put forth the clearest, most forceful case against *ta‘līl*, as well as the most forceful defense of an attitude of utter, unquestioning devotion and submission in relation to the Law. When I speak of the Zahirites, I am thinking in particular of Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, who was full heir to the Zahirite bent, and whose written works and views represent a com-

plete embodiment of Zahirite teachings on the levels of both principle and application.

Ibn Ḥazm and *Ta‘līl*

It is a strange thing indeed that, whereas al-Shāṭibī criticizes and responds to al-Rāzī, he makes no mention of Ibn Ḥazm's position and enters into no discussion of his arguments and views, and this despite the fact that there would have been every reason for him to do so. Firstly, it is Ibn Ḥazm to whom one could rightly attribute the view which al-Shāṭibī attributes instead to al-Rāzī when he states, "Al-Rāzī claims that neither divine precepts nor divine actions may be explained in light of their logical bases or a concern for human interests." And it is Ibn Ḥazm who devotes an entire chapter of his book *al-Iḥkām* to demolishing the notion of *ta‘līl*. In Chapter 39 "On Refutation of the Claim That the Precepts of the Law Can Be Attributed to 'Ilal, or Logical Bases," Ibn Ḥazm attributes a total rejection of *ta‘līl* to all Zahirites who preceded him, saying, "According to Abū Sulaymān¹⁰⁴ and all of his companions God performs no action and issues no precept for the sake of a 'illah. Abū Muḥammad has said: This is the religion which we profess before God Almighty, which we call upon all of God's servants to follow, and which we state unequivocally to be God's truth."¹⁰⁵

Secondly, Ibn Ḥazm goes to extremes in marshalling arguments against his opponents and in attacking and provoking them, all of which makes it very difficult to disregard his position, his specious premises and his conclusions, particularly in view of the fact that he presents all of this as the truth which admits of no discussion or examination. In fact, I feel certain that it was Ibn Ḥazm's words which provoked Ibn al-Qayyim, as he prepared to make a detailed reply to those who reject the practice of *qiyās*, to say, "Now the battle has heated up, thereby kindling the fighting spirit of God's helpers and His Messenger, to defend His religion and the message with which His apostle was sent. It is now time for the party of God to cease fearing the censure of those who might censure them."¹⁰⁶ In fact, Ibn Ḥazm carries his campaign against *ta‘līl* and its proponents

to the point where he claims that “*qiyās*, or analogical deduction and *ta‘līl*, or the tracing of divine precepts to logical bases, are the religion of Satan which stands in violation of the religion of God Almighty and His good pleasure. As for us, we declare before God that we are innocent of both analogical deduction in matters pertaining to religion, and the affirmation of a ‘*illah*, or logical basis, for any aspect of the Law.”¹⁰⁷

Thirdly, it is Ibn Ḥazm who so preoccupied, or captivated, the Malikites of Morocco and Andalusia that on more than one occasion, he came to represent a genuine threat to the stability of their school of jurisprudence. How, then, could al-Shāṭibī – a Malikite – have failed to respond to him?! Was this silence on al-Shāṭibī’s part a deliberate attempt to disregard the Zahirites and, in this way, to put their claims to death? I consider this unlikely, since al-Shāṭibī makes mention of the Zahirites and Ibn Ḥazm on numerous occasions and when he does so, he speaks of them in a tone of fairness and compassion.¹⁰⁸

Be that as it may, what concerns me now is to register my sense that al-Shāṭibī’s failure to address Ibn Ḥazm’s position, to disclaim his views and to expose the speciousness of his arguments constitutes a flaw in a book devoted entirely to the objectives of the Law; for not only does it treat the objectives of the Law but, more than this, it lays the foundation for the theory of objectives, and the foundation for the theory of objectives is *ta‘līl*. Al-Shāṭibī exhibits genuine inspiration when he opens *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid* with a discussion of the question of *ta‘līl* and when he speaks of its validity as ‘incontestable.’ However, in order to ensure that the matter is truly beyond dispute, al-Shāṭibī should have concerned himself with the position taken by Ibn Ḥazm, that obstinate opponent who, in his own hot-tempered, imperious way, sought to discredit the belief that Islamic Law came in order to preserve human interests and that its precepts may be interpreted and understood on this basis since, in so doing, he threatened to discredit everything which might be said about the objectives of the Law. Consequently, this loophole must be closed, as it were, by deconstructing Ibn Ḥazm’s specious arguments in order for both the validity of *ta‘līl* and the Muslim community’s consensus on this

point to be truly beyond dispute and, therefore, invulnerable to attacks by Ibn Ḥazm or anyone else.¹⁰⁹

Consequently, I think it proper for us to reflect briefly¹¹⁰ on the most important of Ibn Ḥazm's views and arguments. To begin with, it should be pointed out that some aspects of the conflict with Ibn Ḥazm may be resolved by what *uṣūl* scholars refer to as "clearing the playing field." In other words, many disagreements may be due to differing usages of key terms. Ibn Ḥazm himself points this out, saying, "The root of all affliction, blindness, disorder and corruption¹¹¹ lies in a confusion of terms and the use of a single word to convey numerous meanings, as a result of which a speaker or writer uses a term with the intention of conveying one meaning, whereas the hearer or reader understands the word to mean something other than what the speaker or writer intended. And there ensues trouble and confusion."¹¹²

One aspect of the conflict with Ibn Ḥazm can be eliminated by noting the fact that he repeatedly criticizes the proponents of *ta‘līl* – and particularly the orthodox sunni scholars – for a claim which they do not make, namely, that *ta‘līl* may be undertaken in the philosophical sense which, as we saw earlier, is likewise rejected by most Ash‘arite scholastic theologians. He states, "The word ‘illah is a term used to refer to any factor which logically necessitates a particular effect or event."¹¹³ If the term ‘illah is used in this sense in relation to Islamic legal rulings, this means that "such rulings were laid down by God Almighty based on factors ('ilal) which logically necessitated that He do so."¹¹⁴ However, none of the orthodox sunni scholars would make this claim; on the contrary, orthodox sunni scholars have generally censured the philosophers and the Mu‘tazilites for using the term ‘illah in this sense.

As we have seen, orthodox scholars speak of intermediary causes or bases (*'ilal ja‘liyyah*) which God, by virtue of His will, has caused (to necessitate this or that ruling) but which require nothing of God. Based on this understanding, they hold that God preserves human interests not out of duty or necessity, but rather, out of His Bounty and Goodness. Against this type of *ta‘līl*, then, Ibn Ḥazm is fighting a losing battle. For if he had taken into consideration the way the

term *'illah* was being used by other scholars of the Law – something of which he could not have been unaware – the gap between him and his supposed opponents would have narrowed, and the ferocity of the battle which had “heated up,” in the words of Ibn al-Qayyim, would have been mitigated.

If, conversely, we take Ibn Ḥazm’s terminology into consideration, the dispute cools down by still another degree. After all, the concept of *'illah* as he defines it is something which all, including the orthodox sunni scholars, would agree unanimously to reject. And as for the concept of *ta'�il* as understood by the orthodox sunni scholars, Ibn Ḥazm himself acknowledges it to some extent. However, rather than referring to it as a *'illah*, he refers to it as a *sabab*. Now, a *sabab*, or cause, as Ibn Ḥazm understands it, is:

anything for the sake of which an actor freely undertakes an action which, if he had wanted to, he could have chosen to refrain from. An example of a *sabab* would be anger which leads one to take revenge. The anger is the *sabab*, or cause, of the revenge; however, if the avenger chose not to take revenge, he would be free not to do so. Hence, a *sabab*, or cause, according to this understanding does not necessitate the effect to which it leads.¹¹⁵

Hence, the essential difference for Ibn Ḥazm between a *'illah* and a *sabab* is that, within his terminological framework, a *'illah* leads by necessity to its effect, whereas a *sabab* entails no necessity or compulsion; rather, the actor upon whom the *sabab* has exerted its influence is free to engage in, or to refrain from, the resulting action.

Understood in this sense, Ibn Ḥazm acknowledges, as did his predecessor Abū Sulaymān, that the Lawgiver has linked some rulings to causes (*asbāb*), as an example of which he cites the words of the Prophet, “The most criminal of all people in Islam are those who ask about something which has not been forbidden, after which it is forbidden because they asked about it.” In addition he declares dying as an unbeliever to be a cause for spending eternity in Hell, dying as a believer to be a cause for entering Paradise, and stealing to be a cause for having one's hand amputated.¹¹⁶ At the same time, however, Ibn

Hazm ties his acknowledgment of this link between rulings and their causes to a set of conditions, a fact which sets him apart unmistakably from most other scholars. As for his conditions, they are as follows:

1. None of these causes may be linked to a divine ruling unless the causal link is declared explicitly (in the Qur'an or the Sunnah); in other words, the link may not merely be deduced or determined based on independent reasoning.
2. These explicitly stated causes may not be employed as the basis for analogical deduction; in other words, they may not be extrapolated to other, analogous situations which are not explicitly mentioned in the text.
3. The explicitly stated links between certain legal rulings and certain causes may not be said to have some wise purpose or objective. In other words, it is not permissible to claim that they are intended to achieve a particular benefit or to prevent a particular type of harm; rather, they are simply the will of God, no more and no less.

Ibn Hazm also employs another term which, if we take it into consideration, bridges the gap between him and his opponents by another degree, slight though it may be. The term I am referring to is *gharad*, generally rendered in English as 'purpose' or 'objective,' and which he defines as follows: "As for the term *gharad*, it refers to whatever one objectives for or intends by means of what one does. Hence, the *gharad* behind taking revenge is to assuage and do away with anger. The anger is the cause, or *sabab*, behind the vengeance, whereas the anger's elimination is its objective, or *gharad*."¹¹⁷ By citing this example, Ibn Hazm is saying that if some legal rulings have causes, and if the legal rulings are, therefore, the effects of such causes, then the Lawgiver may have purposes which He seeks to achieve by means of these effects (that is, rulings). That is to say, they have objectives and purposes! Ibn Hazm appears, in so saying, to approach the majority position; however, he quickly beats a retreat

by proceeding to restrict these principles, circuitous though they are to begin with!

The first restriction which he imposes is reflected in the entire Zahiri tendency. He states, “As for the *gharad* behind God’s actions and precepts, it is none other than what is clear and apparent from the text.”¹¹⁸ In other words, there is no *gharad*, or purpose, which can be discerned through reflection, deduction, inductive reading, or overall *ta’lil*. As for the second restriction, it consists in the stipulation that all such purposes, or *aqrād*, must have to do with the afterlife. Hence, the purpose behind some legal rulings is “for those with hearts and minds able to perceive, to take a lesson therefrom, while the purpose behind others is for God to bring into Paradise those whom He wishes to bring in, or for Him to send to the Hellfire those whom He wills to send there.”¹¹⁹ He then adds the following clarification, saying,

Each of the divine purposes which we have mentioned, whether it be that people take a lesson from a given ruling, that He usher into Paradise those whom He wills and into the Hellfire those whom He wills, or His causing whatever He wills to bring about whatever He wills, is God’s own action and ruling which has no cause [*sabab*] originally, and in which He has no purpose [*gharad*] whatsoever other than that it emerge and come into being. “He cannot be called to account for whatever He does...” (Qur'an, 21:23), and if it were not for the fact that He has expressly stated that He wills for us to take a lesson from such-and-such and to bring into Paradise those whom He wills, we would not have claimed such a thing.¹²⁰

Perhaps the most important ‘evidence’ upon which Ibn Hazm bases his rejection of *ta’lil* and his excoriation of those who support and practice it is the Qur’anic verse to which he refers above, that is, God’s declaration concerning Himself, “He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account” (21:23). What follows is Ibn Hazm’s interpretation of this verse:

God Almighty has stated in description of Himself, “He cannot be

called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account" (21:23). He has thus made a statement concerning the difference between us and Him, namely, that the question "Why?" may not be asked concerning the things He does. Moreover, since it is not permissible for us to ask Him about any of His rulings or actions, saying, "Why is this?" then all causes [*asbab*] are rendered null and void, while all logical bases [*ilal*] [for God's actions] are abolished except in those cases where God states explicitly that He has done a certain thing for a certain purpose. However, He is not to be asked even about these things. No one has the right to say, "Why was this ruling for this cause and not for some other cause?" Nor may anyone say, "Why was this thing made to be a cause without something else's being made a cause as well?" Whoever poses such questions has disobeyed God, Almighty and Majestic is He, and abandoned the religion. Such a person has defied God's declaration that, "He cannot be called to account for whatever He does," and anyone who calls God to account for what He does is wicked and rebellious.¹²¹

In another passage Ibn Ḥazm finds fault with the position of scholars who engage in analogical deduction and search out the bases for legal rulings, saying, "Such people are constantly asking their Lord, 'Why did You do such-and-such?' as though they had never read this verse! May God preserve us from such betrayal!"¹²² Given this understanding and this use of 'evidence,' the aforementioned Qur'anic verse becomes a cutting sword in Ibn Ḥazm's hand, which he brandishes freely and with which, indeed, he deals a blow against whoever would dare to search for the wise purposes of the Law and the logical bases for its rulings. In so doing, he closes off all of what *uṣūl* scholars refer to as "the pathways of *ta‘līl*" (with the sole exception of explicit texts understood in their most literal sense), prohibits all inquiry into the objectives of the Lawgiver and the mysteries of the Law, and brands those who engage in such inquiry as godless and wicked!

The only direct reply I have found to the dangerous way in which Ibn Ḥazm derives support for his position from this verse is that presented by Muḥammad Abū Zahrah. In his most significant rejoinder,

Abū Zahrah points out that Ibn Ḥazm has confused God's actions with His precepts or rulings and, as a consequence, has mistakenly applied the prohibition against inquiry into God's actions to inquiry into His rulings or precepts. Abū Zahrah states,

... God, Glorious and Exalted is He, may not be questioned concerning His actions or His words, since no one possesses authority over against His; He is the Possessor of all Sovereignty, full of Majesty and Glory. No one may presume to question the bases for His actions, since He is the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, the All-Aware. However, does this necessitate a prohibition against inquiry into the bases for the texts of Islamic Law? As I see it, there is a major difference between the bases for legal texts and the bases for God's actions, since inquiry into the bases for the texts of the Law is a means of determining what they mean and what they require of us.¹²³

However, this rejoinder by Abū Zahrah is no match for Ibn Ḥazm's logic and his detailed, elaborate arguments. After all, Ibn Ḥazm, or anyone else who adheres to his view, can maintain that there is no real distinction between God's actions and His rulings, since His rulings are included among His actions, and because His actions entail some of His rulings. In addition, Ibn Ḥazm finds support for the prohibition against *ta'lil* in the words of God Almighty in which He describes Himself as "a Sovereign Doer of whatever He wills" (Qur'an, 11:107 and 85:16). That is to say, God does whatever He wills and issues whatever rulings He wills. No one has the right or capacity to comment on His judgment, since "[When] God judges, there is no power that could repel His judgment" (Qur'an, 13:41), nor can He be called to account for what He does, whether in relation to creation and its management, or in the realm of legislation and its ratification. In all these realms He 'does' what He wills. Hence, whoever asks Him, "Why did You rule thus and so?" is also asking Him, in effect, "Why did You do thus and so?"

Abū Zahrah states that God Almighty cannot be called to account for His actions or His words, after which he proceeds to argue in favor of inquiring into the bases of legal texts, whereas legal texts are

God's words. He also makes mention of the fact that searching out the bases of legal texts is "a means of determining what they mean and what they require of us." In fact, however, there is a difference of degree between *ta'�il* on one hand, and determining what a text means and what it requires of us, on the other. God tells us, for example, "... to have two sisters [as your wives] at one and the same time" (Qur'an, 4:23). The meaning of this text is that it is forbidden for a man to be married, at one and the same time, to two women who are sisters, and what is required of us is to avoid this practice. This, then, is the ruling which human beings are to be aware of and to obey. As for the identification of its basis or purpose, however, this is another matter, or another degree, if you will. Ibn Ḥazm, as will be seen below, raises no objection to the first degree (i.e., being aware of what a ruling requires and adhering to it); on the contrary, he considers it – as do all Muslims – to be a duty. However, he forbids the second degree, which begins when we say, "Why has God forbidden a man to be married simultaneously to two women who are sisters?" This is the question to which Ibn Ḥazm objects; indeed, he forbids it, and declares whoever poses it to be "sinful." Consequently, it would not be permissible for someone to say of this prohibition, for example, that the "wise purpose behind it is to prevent jealousy on the part of those among whom the Lawgiver intends to preserve love and harmony,"¹²⁴ or some other wise purpose which is readily perceived.

Before entering into a discussion and refutation of Ibn Ḥazm's understanding of the verse, "He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account" (The Qur'an, 21:23), and the conclusions which he draws from it, I should add that he also supports his position with another verse which he interprets in a similar way. He writes,

Abū Muḥammad notes that God Almighty has declared, "and that they in whose hearts is disease and they who deny the truth outright might ask: 'What does [your] God mean by this parable?' In this way God lets go astray him that wills [to go astray], and guides aright him that wills [to be guided]" (Qur'an, 74:31). Thus, God has told us that

inquiry into the basis for what He wills is error. This is what the verse has to mean; otherwise, it must entail a prohibition against seeking out the intended meaning, which is an error which no Muslim would accept. On the contrary, attempting to ascertain the meaning which God intended is the duty of all who seek knowledge, and indeed, of every Muslim in the context of his own life circumstances. Hence, the second possibility¹²⁵ must of necessity be the correct one. God has also described Himself as “a Sovereign Doer of whatever He wills” (85:16) and declared concerning Himself that “He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account.” Abū Muhammad states, “This is sufficient as a prohibition against *ta‘lil* of any kind, and given these words, anyone who engages in this practice is disobeying God. May God preserve us from such perfidy!”¹²⁶

This is the cornerstone of the Zahirite position in general, and of Ibn Ḥazm’s position in particular, on the matter of *ta‘lil*, or, as Ibn Ḥazm terms it, “the accursed question”!¹²⁷

These teachings of Ibn Ḥazm’s, and particularly the conclusions which he draws from the two aforementioned verses, rest upon a glaring fallacy. However, because Abū Zahrah fails to note this fallacy, he is not able to deal a death blow to Ibn Ḥazm’s arguments. The words, “He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account” mean that God Almighty may not be called to account by anyone for what He does; nor may anyone call Him to account for His judgments: “[When] God judges, there is no power that could repel His judgment” (Qur’ān, 13:41). Human beings, by contrast, may be asked, called to account, chastised and reproved for their errors. The reason for this is that God Almighty is the Creator and Master of all, the One who possesses everything in the heavens and on earth, in this life and the life to come. In addition, He is the Wisest of those who judge, the most Merciful of the merciful, the most Truthful of those who speak, the All-Knowing and the All-Aware. And it is on this basis – or, rather, these bases – that there is no possibility of correcting or taking exception to his actions and judgments.

For these reasons, then, the Lord Almighty “cannot be called to

account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account." In other words, He may not be asked a question the intent of which is to remonstrate with Him or to hold Him accountable. This, then, is the meaning of the verse, and there can be no doubt that to question God in this sense is an expression of unbelief. Moreover, it is here that we come up against the error, or fallacy, to which Ibn Hazm falls prey when he prohibits *ta'lil* on the basis of this and similar verses from the Qur'an. For to pose questions concerning the bases for legal rulings and the hidden wisdom and wise purposes which underlie God's actions is to seek to understand and to learn. These types of questions or inquiries were asked by the prophets and the righteous and they find both mention and approval in the Qur'an, a fact which should do away with the faulty understanding adopted by Ibn Hazm and on the basis of which he relegates the majority of scholars – his predecessors and successors alike – to the ranks of the foolish.

Before citing examples of the point I have just raised, allow me to clarify further both Ibn Hazm's proof text and its context. The context of the verse is an affirmation of the divine oneness and uniqueness and a refutation of polytheism,

For unto Him belong all [beings] that are in the heavens and on earth; and those that are with Him are never too proud to worship Him and never grow weary [thereof]: they extol His limitless Glory by night and by day, never flagging [therein]. And yet, some people choose to worship certain earthly things or beings as deities that [are supposed to] resurrect [the dead: and they fail to realize that], had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than God, both [those realms] would surely have fallen into ruin! But limitless in His Glory is God, enthroned in His awesome Almightiness [far] above anything that men may devise by way of definition! He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, whereas they will be called to account: and yet, they choose to worship [imaginary] deities instead of Him! Say [O Prophet]: "Produce an evidence for what you are claiming: this is a reminder [unceasingly voiced] by those who are with me, just as it was a reminder [voiced] by those who came before me." But nay, most of them do not

know the truth, and so they stubbornly turn away [from it] – and [this despite the fact that even] before thy time We never sent any apostle without having revealed to him that there is no deity save Me, [and that,] therefore, you shall worship Me [alone]! And [yet,] some say, “The Most Gracious has taken unto Himself a son”! Limitless is He in His Glory! Nay, [those whom they regard as God’s “offspring” are but His] honored servants: they speak not until He has spoken unto them, and [whenever they act,] they act at His behest. He knows all that lies open before them and all that is hidden from them: hence, they cannot intercede for any but those whom He has [already] graced with His goodly acceptance, since they themselves stand in reverent awe of Him. And if any of them were to say, “Behold, I am a deity beside Him” – that one We should requite with hell: thus do We requite all [such] evildoers. (Qur'an, 21:19-29)

The verse which Ibn Hazm cites as evidence in support of his rejection of *ta'�il* appears in the context of an affirmation of the singularity of the One, Glory be to Him, that is, an affirmation of those attributes which belong to Him alone, and which, therefore, distinguish Him from His so-called ‘partners.’ One such attribute is that unlike other beings, the One cannot be called to account, reproved, or remonstrated with. As for other alleged deities, be they angels or human beings, they are answerable for what they do and say, they will be called to account, and they will be brought to judgment; yet any being to whom such descriptions apply cannot be divine.

This, then, is the context of the type of questioning which must be negated in relation to God but which may be affirmed in relation to God's creatures. In clarification of this point Ibn Ashur writes,

Questioning here is being spoken of in the sense of calling to account, demanding an explanation for the reason behind an action, [requesting] an apology for something which has been done, and [offering] release from blame or reproach for what has been done. It is, in other words, like the questioning referred to in the Prophetic hadith which reads, “Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is answerable for his flock.” The fact that the Prophet’s listeners are answerable is an allu-

sion to their status as servants, since the servant is subject to being censured for what he does or does not do, just as he is liable to err in some of what he does.

We do not intend here to deny the legitimacy of requesting counsel or seeking knowledge [from God]; nor are we negating the permissibility of supplication, seeking benefit, or attempts to search out new knowledge, as, for example, through the questions posed by students of jurisprudence and scholastic theologians concerning the wise purposes being fulfilled through legal rulings or cosmic systems. The reason for this is that questions of this nature fall within the category of discovery and the pursuit of knowledge, and are not attempts to question God Almighty or to absolve Him of supposed blame. This distinction serves to disprove the divinity of those beings who occupy places close to God, such as the angels who were worshipped by polytheists and whom the latter claimed to be daughters of God Almighty, since it negates of such beings those qualities which are peculiar to the true God alone. After all, they will be called to account for what they do, whereas the truly Divine cannot be thus called to account. Hence, the statement, “He cannot be called to account for whatever He does” is an allusion to the fact that God’s actions are always in accordance with perfect wisdom such that if a critic were to examine them thoughtfully and with care, or if he were given insight into the aspects of such actions which were heretofore beyond his perception, he would find nothing in them to condemn.¹²⁸

Given the foregoing, we may now identify the secret to resolving this question and the decisive criterion by means of which to distinguish between one type of questioning and another – between the type of question for which Ibn Ḥazm brands others as “sinful,” and the type of question by means of which one seeks to draw near to God and to merit divine favor and reward. Specifically, any question which is posed to God concerning any of God’s acts, words, or judgments with the intent of protesting, censuring, mocking or calling to account is a manifestation of error and unbelief; this is the motive behind the question which appears in the verse cited by Ibn Ḥazm in

support of prohibiting a search for the bases of legal rulings: “and that they in whose hearts is disease and they who deny the truth outright might ask: ‘What does [your] God mean by this parable?’ In this way God lets go astray him that wills [to go astray], and guides aright him that wills [to be guided]” (*Qur’ān*, 74:31). The question mentioned in this verse is posed by those who deny the truth and those “in whose hearts is disease” and, as is clear from the circumstances which provided the occasion for the revelation of this verse, it is asked in a tone of mockery and disdain.

Comparable to this verse is another which is found in *Surat al-Baqarah*: “...those who are bent on denying the truth say, ‘What could God mean by this parable?’” (2:26). On this verse al-Qurtubī comments, saying, “These words of theirs are an expression of denial in the form of a question.”¹²⁹ A similar message is conveyed by the hadith in which the Messenger of God decreed that a wergild should be paid on behalf of an unborn child which was killed along with its mother. After he had issued this ruling, Ḥamal ibn al-Nābighah – from the clan of the woman who committed the murder and who, according to the ruling, would be required to pay the two wergilds – rises and says, “O Messenger of God, how can I be fined for the sake of someone who has never drunk, eaten, spoken or uttered the name of God over a sacrifice? For the blood of such an entity calls for no wergild.” In response to this, the Messenger of God declared, “This man is a brother of soothsayers.”¹³⁰

The statement made by Ḥamal ibn al-Nābighah is a type of rhetorical question the intent behind which is dissent and protest and which, if addressed to God, is a form of unbelief, or nearly so. It is for this reason that the Messenger of God is angered and describes the man in the way that he does. In his commentary on *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, al-Nawawī states, “Scholars have held that he condemned the man’s use of rhymed prose¹³¹ for two reasons, one of which is that by means of it, he defied the ruling of the Law and expressed the desire for it to be nullified...”¹³² As a matter of fact, however, the Prophet’s condemnation is not directed against the man’s use of rhymed prose but, rather, against the defiant content of his words and his rejection of the ruling issued by God and His Messenger. In

situations such as this, then, it is valid and appropriate to cite these verses.

If, on the other hand, such a question is voiced in an attitude of complete faith in God and His attributes of perfection, and in particular, His justice and wisdom; and if the question is motivated by the desire for greater understanding of God's wise purposes as revealed in His Laws and His manner of disposing of affairs, it thereby becomes a legitimate, and indeed, even a praiseworthy question rather than one which merits condemnation, provided, of course, that it is voiced in a courteous manner. As a matter of fact, such questions have been asked by God's righteous, chosen servants whose lives are models for all to emulate:

- The angels asked their Lord, “Wilt Thou place on [the Earth] such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood – whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless Glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?” (Qur'an, 2:30)
- God's beloved friend Abraham said, “O my Sustainer! Show me how Thou givest life unto the dead!” (Qur'an, 2:260) Commenting on this verse, al-Qurṭubī writes, “He [Abraham] was simply asking for a direct, experiential vision, since it is a natural thing for one to long to see that about which one has been told. He then justifies his request by saying, ‘so that my heart may be set fully at rest,’ by closing the gap, as it were, between that which he knew based on evidence, and that which he knew through direct experience.”¹³³
- Upon receiving the glad tidings of a son, both Mary and Zachariah had questions for God. “[Zachariah] exclaimed, ‘O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me, and my wife is barren?’” (Qur'an, 3:40) As for Mary, she said, “O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?” (3:47) Both of them, overwhelmed and disconcerted in the presence of God and His power, found themselves addressing questions to the One concerned, Glory be to Him, [aware] of His power to accomplish all things and His perfect knowledge.

All the questions just mentioned have to do with God's actions; in other words, they do not pertain to the divinely revealed Law. Even so, they were posed by the most exemplary of God's servants. As for questions having to do with God's rulings, an example thereof is found in the circumstances which occasioned the revelation of the following passage from the Qur'an:

Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for [all of] them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward. (33:35)

Concerning the circumstances which occasioned the revelation of this passage, it is related by Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal and al-Nassā'ī that Umm Salamah once asked the Prophet, "Why is it that we [women] are not mentioned in the Qur'an as men are?" whereupon God sent down this verse.¹³⁴ Even though the question posed by the Mother of the Faithful Umm Salamah or by other female Companions as recorded in other accounts, was addressed directly to the Prophet, it was, in actual fact, addressed to God Himself, Majestic in His Glory is He, and for this reason God Almighty undertook Himself to answer it. Moreover, this question, or this questioning, was not a cause for condemnation or blame, which confirms that it was devoid of all dubious motives or intentions. Rather, it was an honest expression of the desire for knowledge and understanding together with perfect contentment (in God) and submission (to Him) no matter what the answer might happen to be.

Given this discussion of the most important evidence proffered by Ibn Ḥazm and the most relevant to our topic, I see no need to present his other arguments against *ta‘lil*.¹³⁵ Some of these arguments are disproven by the evidence which has been presented in this sec-

tion in support of *ta'lil*, and which there is no need to repeat, others are obviously invalid, particularly in light of the foregoing discussion, while still others delve into scholastic, philosophical discussions which I do not wish to go into. As for the examples cited by Ibn Hazm from the realm of jurisprudence in order to invalidate *qiyās* and *ta'lil*, a thorough-going response to these may be found in what was written by Ibn al-Qayyim in refutation of those who reject the practice of analogical deduction, or *qiyās*, even though he mentions none of them by name.¹³⁶

It should be affirmed here once again that the process of identifying the bases and wise purposes of legal rulings is associated with specific methods, limits and criteria. All of these are expounded in the appropriate sections of books devoted to the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and the jurisprudence of hadith (*fiqh al-hadīth*), and applied in books on jurisprudence and commentaries on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

It may be affirmed with confidence that there is not a single legal ruling in Islam but that it is permissible to inquire into its wise purpose and to search for this purpose employing all the methods of research and knowledge which God has made available to us. If, then, we arrive at a conclusion which is attested to by reliable evidence, we may accept it, and if we do not, we surrender to God's wisdom in the matter whatever it happens to be. The search goes on, knowledge is limitless, and God has commanded us to use our minds, to reflect, to ponder, and to examine His religion and His Law, His creation and His sovereign domain. He says, "Will they not, then, try to understand this Qur'an?" (Qur'an, 4:82) and, "Do, then, they [who deny resurrection] never gaze at the clouds pregnant with water, [and observe] how they are created? And at the sky, how it is raised aloft? And at the mountains, how firmly they are reared? And at the earth, how it is spread out?" (88:17-20) In both realms there is a need to ask about the bases for things and the laws which govern them, about mysteries and wise purposes. Such inquiries, of course, should be kept within the limits of what is possible, or what appears to be possible; meanwhile, may God's blessing rest on those who recognize their limitations and do not seek to go beyond them.

In our current area of concern, that is, the sphere of Islamic Law and its rulings, it should be recalled that in order for our understanding of the Law and its purposes to advance, we must proceed with the full certainty and confidence that this Law, to borrow the words of Ibn al-Qayyim, “is nothing but justice, nothing but mercy, nothing but benefit, nothing but wisdom...”¹³⁷ And as al-Qurṭubī – a fellow countryman of Ibn Ḥazm’s – puts it, “Among the discerning, there is no one who would dispute the fact that the intent behind the Laws revealed through the prophets is to preserve human interests, both worldly and otherworldly, material and spiritual.”¹³⁸

We are thus called upon to inquire into the material and spiritual benefits and purposes which underlie the rulings of Islamic Law, since in this way we will be enabled to understand them, apply them, and be guided aright in situations which receive no explicit mention in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Distinguished scholar Ibn Ashur states,

In sum, we are certain that all the rulings of Islamic Law entail objectives, that is, wise purposes, interests and benefits. Consequently, our scholars are duty bound to acquaint themselves with the Law's logical bases and purposes, both those which are readily perceived and those which are hidden from view.¹³⁹

And just as it is impossible for someone who lacks faith in the laws of the universe, their regularity, stability, perfection and precision to progress in any of the material sciences, neither is it possible for one who lacks faith in the all-encompassing wisdom of the divinely revealed legislation, its orderly laws and its sound principles, to achieve any progress in the sciences of Islamic Law.

[II]

Sources of Benefit and Harm

If the discussion of *ta‘līl* is a discussion of the foundation of the objectives of Islamic Law, then the discussion of sources of benefit

and harm is a discussion of the heart of these objectives. For as we have seen, these objectives may be summed up in the phrase, “achieving benefit and preventing harm;” hence, the critical importance of the theme we are about to consider. In what follows I shall attempt to highlight and clarify al-Shāṭibī’s most important views on the sources of benefit and harm, comparing them with other relevant perspectives and completing them as seems appropriate.

The Concepts of Benefit and Harm

A premise which admits of neither doubt nor disagreement is that the terms ‘benefit’ and ‘harm,’ when employed by Muslim scholars in this all-encompassing and unconditional manner, include benefit and harm in both this world and the next. As we have quoted al-Shāṭibī as saying earlier, “[divinely revealed] Laws have all been established to preserve human beings’ interests both in this life and the life to come,”¹⁴⁰ a statement the truth of which is so self-evident that it calls for neither proof nor clarification. Equally self-evident is the affirmation that ‘benefit’ as it relates to the life to come is whatever brings God’s favor and blessing or increases the degree to which they are experienced, while ‘harm’ as it relates to the life to come is whatever brings God’s disfavor and chastisement or increases the degree to which they are experienced. Or, more properly speaking, we might say that ‘benefit’ as it relates to the life to come is God’s favor and blessing, while ‘harm’ as it relates to the life to come is God’s disfavor and chastisement. This being the case, those things which bring either God’s favor and blessing or His disfavor and chastisement are only referred to as sources of benefit or harm to the extent that one may apply to means the ruling which applies in actuality to the ends to which they lead, or to the extent that one may apply to causes the ruling which applies in actuality to their effects.

It is important that we bear in mind these self-evident truths as we examine the definitions which *uṣūl* scholars have offered of ‘benefit’ (*maṣlahah*)¹⁴¹ and ‘harm’ (*mafsadah*). According to one scholar, for example, “interest” may be defined as the achievement of benefit or the prevention of harm,¹⁴² while according to another, “benefit is

equivalent to pleasure or whatever leads to it, while harm is equivalent to pain or whatever leads to it.”¹⁴³ In other words, “Interest, or benefit, means nothing other than pleasure or that which serves as a means thereto, while harm means nothing but pain or whatever serves as a means thereto.”¹⁴⁴ However, we should not lose sight of the fact that definitions such as these are inclusive of both physical and non-physical types of pleasure and pain. It is with this in mind that Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām refines his definition, saying, “There are four types of interest or benefit, namely: pleasure and its causes, and happiness and its causes. Similarly, there are four types of harm, namely: pain and its causes, and sorrow or distress and its causes. Moreover, these are divided into worldly and otherworldly...”¹⁴⁵ Thus, in the realm of benefits, Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām draws a distinction between pleasure and happiness, and in the realm of harm, between pain, and sorrow or mental distress; in so doing, he draws attention to the fact that there are types of benefit and harm which are non-material in nature. Moreover, such non-material forms of benefit and harm are, without a doubt, included in the aforementioned definitions.

In his definition of worldly interests, al-Shāṭibī also draws attention to the non-material aspect of benefit and harm, saying, “What I mean by interests is whatever supports human life and well-being and ensures that people obtain whatever they need in the physical and non-physical dimensions, thereby enabling them to experience blessing on all levels.”¹⁴⁶

Based on the foregoing definitions, then, the concept of benefit and harm as employed by Muslim scholars includes: (1) other-worldly benefits, their causes and the means by which they are attained, (2) other-worldly types of harm, their causes and the means by which they are attained, (3) earthly benefits, their causes and the means by which they are attained, and (4) earthly types of harm, their causes and the means by which they are attained. The essence of benefit, then, is pleasure and enjoyment, be it physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, while the essence of harm is pain or suffering, be it physical, emotional, mental or spiritual. Hence speaking of human beings’ interests in terms of pleasure and enjoyment in no wise means that they are limited to the satisfaction of lusts and bodily instincts;

rather, they include pleasures, sources of enjoyment, and benefits with numerous facets and dimensions; the same thing, moreover, may be said of harm.

In order to avoid any confusion in relation to the concept of ‘interest,’ al-Shāṭibī makes it clear that true interests are those which serve not to destroy life, but to support and nurture it, and which contribute to the attainment of blessedness in the life to come. He writes,

Whatever benefit is achieved and whatever harm is avoided are considered only on the basis of whether and how this earthly life prepares the way for the life to come; they are not considered on the basis of whether they help to satisfy the desire to achieve one’s own interests and to avoid harm as these terms are ordinarily understood. For the Law has come in order to deliver human beings from [the tyranny of] their selfish desires and whims in order that they might become servants of God alone. And if this is true, then it is a truth which cannot be reconciled with the premise that Islamic Law was established in harmony with selfish ambitions and the pursuit of immediate gratification however one chooses. As our Lord has declared, “But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin, and all that lives in them [would long ago have perished]!” (Qur’ān, 23:71) Hence, the Law takes into consideration that which is of greater significance, namely, the achievement of people’s best interest – the pillar of both our material and spiritual existence – not what people happen to like or dislike.¹⁴⁷

For this reason the Law has set limits and restrictions on the attainment and enjoyment of various types of benefits since, given human beings’ impetuosity and shortsightedness, they may be concerned to achieve a certain benefit which is associated with various sorts of harm, or which will cause them to forfeit other benefits which are of greater importance than the benefit they seek. By the same token, they may seek to avoid some immediate type of harm, as a result of which they expose themselves to some other harm which is even greater. Or, in seeking immediate relief, they may bring prolonged suffering upon themselves or others. “Many a moment’s

pleasure has given rise to untold grief and calamitous affliction.”¹⁴⁸

This brings us to the matter of the overlap which often occurs between benefit and harm. A given action may be a source of benefit in one respect and a source of harm in another; it may bring short-term benefit, but ultimate harm, or vice-versa; similarly, it may bring benefit to one person, but harm to another. As it was said of old, “One man’s meat is another man’s poison.” What this means is that there is no such thing as ‘pure benefit’ or ‘pure harm.’ “This being the case, sources of earthly benefit and harm are to be assessed on the basis of which of the two elements is predominant: If the predominant effect [of a given thing, action, etc.] is beneficial, it is classified as a benefit as this term is customarily understood, whereas if its predominant effect is harmful, it is classified as a source of harm as this term is generally employed.”¹⁴⁹

The overlap between benefit and harm was discussed by a number of al-Shāṭibī’s predecessors. Al-Qarāfī, for example, states,

...An inductive reading of Islamic Law leads one necessarily to conclude that there is no benefit which does not entail some degree of harm, however slight it may be in the long run, nor is there any type of harm which does not entail some degree of benefit, however slight it may be in the long term. As God Almighty states concerning intoxicants and games of chance, “Say: ‘In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring.’” (Qur’ān, 2:219).¹⁵⁰

Before al-Qarāfī, his shaykh Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām declared, “A pure benefit is a difficult thing to find.”¹⁵¹ However, al-Shāṭibī’s treatment of the topic is distinguished by its objectives-based precision. Specifically, he states that when the Lawgiver enjoins a benefit which entails some degree of harm, it is not this harm which He intends, and when He prohibits some type of harm which entails a degree of benefit, it is not this benefit which is the object or intent of the prohibition:

If, judged by commonly accepted standards, it is a beneficial influence

which prevails by comparison with a harmful influence, then it is this benefit which is taken into consideration by the Law, and it is for the sake of its attainment that human beings are urged or commanded to engage in a certain action. If, by virtue of their thus acting, some harm or hardship results, it is not this harm or hardship which the Law intends by permitting or commanding this action. Conversely, if, judged by commonly accepted standards, it is a harmful influence which prevails by comparison with a beneficial influence, it is this harm which is taken into consideration by the Law, and it is for the sake of eliminating it that the Law prohibits the action concerned. And if, by virtue of a prohibited action, some benefit or enjoyment results, it is not in order to prevent this enjoyment or benefit that the act has been prohibited. What follows from all of this, then, is that the benefits which are taken into consideration by the Law are 'pure' and untainted by any sort of harm.¹⁵²

Given the fact that in life's daily reality, there is this degree of overlap, intermingling and conflict between sources of benefit and harm, there needs to be a Law to which people submit and under whose authority they place themselves. This is the supreme, or 'universal' interest, since it is from this that all benefits arise and by which they are guaranteed. This truth is embodied in Islamic Law, because

the rulings of the Law encompass a universal interest, as well as a particular interest peculiar to each specific case. The particular interest is indicated by each piece of evidence as it relates to this or that case or circumstance; as for the universal interest, it is for every human being to be answerable to some specific precept of the Law in all of his movements, words and beliefs. Otherwise, he remains like a dumb beast left to roam at will until he is reined in by the Law.¹⁵³

Another self-evident truth related to the concept of interest is that Islamic Law calls for the preservation of interests of all kinds and on all levels. As we have seen on more than one occasion, it calls for the preservation of what are termed 'essential' interests and their com-

plements, ‘exigencies’ and their complements, as well as the ‘embellishments’ no matter how insignificant they may appear to be. What this means is that Islamic Law neglects nothing, great or small, in the realm of benefit and harm. Moreover, anything which is not included in its specific texts has been included in its general ones.

What I have just stated may appear to be problematic when viewed in relation to the division of interests into the three categories of ‘recognized interests’ (*maṣāliḥ mu‘tabarah*), ‘nullified interests’ (*maṣāliḥ mulghāh*), and ‘unrestricted interests’ (*maṣāliḥ mursalah*). Based on this division, universally recognized among *uṣūl* scholars, the Law only undertakes to preserve the first type of interests, that is, ‘recognized interests,’ whereas it is silent on the third type (‘unrestricted interests’), and has abrogated the second type (‘nullified interests’). If this is taken to be true, then Islamic Law preserves only one type of interest and either abrogates or neglects all others!

Now, the fact of the matter is that the interests which the Law has abrogated, that is, the ‘nullified interests’ based on the aforementioned division, are, more properly speaking, interests which have been relegated to a place of lower priority due to the fact that they come in conflict with interests which are considered to be of greater importance or urgency. Hence, the preservation of that which is viewed as of most importance is given priority over the preservation of other interests if it is difficult or impossible to preserve them both simultaneously. However, this involves no abrogation or nullification of the interest per se. The clearest example of this phenomenon may be seen in the verse quoted above on the matter of intoxicants and games of chance. The verse states clearly that intoxicants and games of chance involve both harm and benefit; however, the harmful aspects of these things are numerous, in addition to which they affect society as a whole, whereas the benefits which they offer are few and affect only certain individuals. Consequently, the Lawgiver has chosen to disregard the few benefits which might be enjoyed as a result of intoxicants and games of chance and chosen instead to preserve the public interest and ward off the harm which they cause by prohibiting them. Even so, the benefits which have been negated in this case have not been negated unconditionally or absolutely. For

if we assume that the benefits offered by intoxicants and games of chance are things such as financial profit, the pleasurable feeling of being 'high' by drinking, or of winning at the gambling table, such benefits are not negated entirely by the Law, which has permitted innumerable means by which such pleasures can be experienced; however, such permissible means are not associated with sources of harm which are equal to or greater than the benefits they offer, nor do they cause one to miss out on some interest which, by comparison, is of greater importance.

Hence, the 'nullification' of certain interests is, in point of fact, none other than the preservation of human beings' true interest. This truth may be seen in all 'nullified interests,' which have only been nullified in specific cases whereas they are recognized and preserved in innumerable other cases. What this means is that the preservation of human interest – whatever the interest happens to be – is always the fundamental principle. As for nullification, it will only apply in limited cases and in respect to particular individuals. Moreover, such nullification entails the preservation of other aspects of these individuals' interests and the interests of others as well. At the same time, it must be remembered that interests which have been nullified in such situations have not been forfeited entirely or unconditionally; rather, there are numerous legitimate avenues by means of which they may be realized. Al-Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī states in this connection,

When the Creator, Glory be to Him, in His peerless wisdom, created for us all that is on earth as He has told us He did, He apportioned things in such a way that there were things which He would allow unconditionally, others which He would allow in some situations but not in others, and still other things which He would allow in one respect but not in another. However, if there is anything on Earth which is never allowed in any respect or under any circumstances, I have yet to encounter it.¹⁵⁴

As for what are termed 'unrestricted interests,' or 'public welfare,' they are, similarly, not interests which have been neglected or about

which the Lawgiver has nothing to say. In other words, they are not ‘unrestricted’ in the absolute sense; rather, they are ‘unrestricted’ only in the sense that there is no specific, explicit mention of them in the texts of Islamic Law. However, insofar as they are, in fact, interests, and even more importantly, insofar as they belong to the category of that which is good and beneficial, it could well be said that there is no such thing as an ‘unrestricted interest’ at all. After all, what interest could remain ‘unrestricted’ given God Almighty’s command, “and do good, so that you might attain to a happy state!” (Qur'an, 22:77) or His declaration that “Behold, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good” (16:90)? Indeed, God makes clear that He sent His Messenger to people in order to “enjoin upon them the doing of what is right and forbid them the doing of what is wrong” (7:157), He spurs the believers on to do “righteous deeds,”¹⁵⁵ and He commands them to cooperate in doing what is good, saying, “help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness” (5:2).

People are commanded, in these and other passages of the Qur'an, to do good, act justly, be kind to others and commit themselves to a life of righteousness; not only this, but they are commanded to help one another in furthering all such virtues. On this their ultimate spiritual well-being depends, and there will be no true well-being for them, whether in this life or the life to come, by any other path:

Consider the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself unless he be of those who attain to faith, and do good works, and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity. (Qur'an, 103:1-3)

Worthy of reflection in this connection is the hadith which Imam Muslim narrates on the authority of Majāshi‘ ibn Mas‘ūd al-Sulamī, who said, “I came to the Prophet with the intention of pledging myself to emigrate [to Madinah], but he said to me, ‘Those who were meant to emigrate have already done so; as for you, pledge yourself to Islam, jihad, and the doing of good.’” In fact, any one of the passages quoted here would be sufficient by itself to show that there is no true interest or benefit which is not required of us and included

within the sphere of Islamic Law and its concern.

In addition, there is unanimous agreement among Muslim scholars – regardless of their varied specialties and schools of thought and the various ages in which they have lived – that Islamic Law calls for the preservation of the ‘essentials,’ ‘exigencies’ and ‘embellishments,’ and that the interests whose preservation is the most vital are: religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth. Similarly, there is a consensus that “whatever contributes to the preservation of these five essentials is a benefit, and everything which causes them to be forfeited is a source of harm, while its prevention is a benefit.”¹⁵⁶

Is it possible, then, to imagine an interest which falls outside the scope of service to these essentials on the three levels mentioned here? I, for one, find it impossible to conceive of. Imam al-Ghazālī declares, “Properly speaking, unrestricted reasoning (*al-istidlāl al-mursal*)^{*} in connection with the Law is so inconceivable that we can speak of it in terms of neither negation nor affirmation...”¹⁵⁷

It follows, then, that all interests are ‘recognized interests,’ and that there is no such thing as an interest which is either ‘unrestricted’ or ‘nullified’ in the absolute sense.

Identifying Interests Through Human Reason

The question of whether interests may be identified through human reason is, more or less, the equivalent of what has been known in the realms of scholastic theology and the fundamentals of jurisprudence as the question of *al-tahṣīn wa al-taqbīh*, that is, whether it is possible through human reason to determine whether a given act is good and praiseworthy, or evil and blameworthy, or whether this can only be determined based on explicit declarations of the Law. The reason I say that it is ‘more or less’ equivalent to this age-old question is that, firstly, I do not wish to review the debates which have raged over this question and, secondly, I do not wish to enter the labyrinths of what is known as scholastic theology. Rather, I want to treat the subject only to the degree necessary. I have chosen to raise this issue in light of its importance for and influence on the question of how

interests can be identified, and because al-Shāṭibī himself was not completely free of its negative impact, by which I mean specifically his having been influenced by the Ash‘arite perspective on this question. And in fact, this Ash‘arite perspective is still extant, if not dominant, to this very day.

In the course of discussing the theme of *al-taḥṣīn wa al-taqbīḥ*, it will be possible for us to observe some manifestations of al-Shāṭibī’s Ash‘arite leanings in this area, as well as the features of the Ash‘arite perspective on *al-taḥṣīn wa al-taqbīḥ*.

Al-Shāṭibī states directly that his view is based on what has been established in scholastic theology – by which he also means Ash‘arite scholastic theology. In the tenth premise, he affirms – as would any Muslim – that “if textual and rational evidence are in mutual agreement concerning legal questions, the textual evidence must be given priority over the rational such that reason is given only the degree of latitude which the textual evidence allows.”¹⁵⁸ He then proceeds to offer evidence in support of this statement. He affirms, for example, “that according to the findings of scholastic theologians and scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, reason does not judge things to be either good or bad.”¹⁵⁹ In other words, it is not able, nor does it have the right, to judge things and actions as being good or evil, that is, to be sources of either benefit or harm.

The basis for this denial is that in the Ash‘arite view, things and actions are neither good nor evil in and of themselves. Hence, they ask, how could the mind perceive that which is ‘nonexistent,’ that is, the goodness or badness of things, or their usefulness or harmfulness? According to the Ash‘arites, nothing may be said to be either good or evil unless the Law declares it to be so. Without the Law’s declaration of something to be good or evil, there is no such thing as ‘goodness’ or ‘evil;’ moreover, this applies to everything without exception. Al-Shāṭibī reiterates this same view, saying:

The fact that a benefit is a benefit or that a source of harm is a source of harm is determined based on the ruling of the Law. Given the negation of *al-taḥṣīn wa al-taqbīḥ*, this is a matter which concerns the Lawgiver alone, and human reason has no role to play in it. If the Lawgiver has

issued a ruling concerning a given benefit, it is He who has established it as a benefit; otherwise, it would be possible, logically speaking, for the same entity not to be a benefit. For all things are, in essence, equal, and it would be impossible for reason to declare some good and others bad. Consequently, the fact that a benefit is a benefit is determined by the Lawgiver alone; this is a reality to which human reason gives assent and which the human soul accepts in tranquillity.¹⁶⁰

Al-Shāṭibī affirms this message in another context as well, and with even greater clarity, saying, “On the level of mere logic, actions and omissions, in so far as they are actions and omissions, are all identical with respect to what is intended by them, since human reason is incapable of declaring things to be either good or bad.”¹⁶¹ Unlike *uṣūl* scholars and Ash‘arite theologians who discuss the question of *al-tahṣīn wa al-taqbīḥ* at length and refute the Mu‘tazilites’ views in detail, al-Shāṭibī touches on the matter only briefly. Yet despite this fact, Ash‘arite influence is evident in what he writes, since he denies the view that actions can be spoken of as good or bad in themselves, that is, the view that actions are, in and of themselves, sources of either benefit or harm. Rather, he affirms that with respect to human reason, actions and omissions are equal and identical. He thus holds that human reason is incapable of declaring actions to be either good or bad, which is the essence of Ash‘arite theory. Imam al-Juwainī, a leading Ash‘arite thinker, states,

‘Goodness’ is not an attribute which inheres in things or actions and which is perceived by means of the Law. Rather, ‘goodness’ is, itself, the Law’s commendation of the person who engages in the act concerned; and the same applies to ‘badness.’ Hence, when we describe an action as being either obligatory or prohibited, we do not mean by this that the obligatory act in question possesses some attribute by means of which it is distinguished from that which is not obligatory. Rather, what is meant by ‘obligatory’ is simply an act which the Law has declared to be required, while what is meant by ‘prohibited’ is simply an act which the Law has declared to be forbidden.¹⁶²

In opposition to the Ash'arite view there are two other theories, namely, those of the Mu'tazilites and the Maturidites. According to the Mu'tazilites, goodness and evil are rationally discernible properties; that is to say, things, actions and omissions may rightly be described as beneficial or harmful before a legal ruling declares them to be so. Hence, the mind is capable of perceiving and affirming these properties. However, the Mu'tazilites go further than this to claim that in the absence of a legal ruling, sensible, rational human beings are held accountable (to God) by virtue of reason alone. What this means is that just as legal rulings may be confirmed by divine revelation, so also may they be confirmed by human reason.

As for the Maturidites and other fair-minded people willing to investigate matters with care, they agree with the Mu'tazilites that goodness and evil are rationally discernible properties. However, this premise does not lead them to the same conclusion as that of the Mu'tazilites. Hence, they do not hold that legal rulings and obligations may be confirmed by means of human reason alone; rather, they hold that this confirmation requires hearing/divine revelation as well.

The Mu'tazilite point of view passed out of existence along with its proponents, and is only mentioned now by way of refutation and criticism. The Ash'arite theory, however, has survived and spread; in fact, there are still writers who adopt it lock, stock and barrel despite the fact that the circumstances which gave rise to it ceased to exist centuries ago. Muhammad Said al-Buti, for example, states,

Benefit and harm as spoken of in relation to actions are no more than an effect and result of the Lawgiver's rulings on things such that some are prohibited, others are allowed, others are commanded, and so forth. Otherwise, as we have stated, it would be invalid to speak of interests as a branch of the religion.¹⁶³

What this means is that the benefit or harm which we attribute to things and actions is nothing but a fruit of the revelation of divine Laws, and that before these revelations and their associated rulings were received, there was no such thing as either benefit or harm!

Moreover, according to al-Buti, a failure to affirm this view necessitates the invalidity of the claim that interests or benefits are a branch of the (Islamic) religion.

Al-Buti then continues, saying, “As for the claim that God’s judgments follow upon interests and benefits, this is false, and is denied by the majority of Muslims,¹⁶⁴ since it contradicts the established view that there is no such thing as ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ as rationally discernible properties of actions.”¹⁶⁵ In so saying, al-Buti is making a claim of the utmost seriousness which flies in the face of the most self-evident truths. Nevertheless, the only evidence which he adduces in its support is “the established view” that ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ as rationally discernible properties do not exist! It remains to ask, then: Who has established this view? How was it established? And what validity can it claim? However, it is not advisable to raise such questions, since this might disprove what he himself has established!

As for the fact that the view which al-Buti has established – and which he has adduced as evidence for further conclusions – flies in the face of self-evident truths, this was sensed by those who first advocated it. Al-Juwainī, for example, states,

We do not deny that people’s reason requires them to avoid perils and to seek out whatever benefits are possible for them, the details thereof varying from one situation to another. A refusal to recognize this would be senseless, for this is human beings’ right. Rather, what we are speaking of has to do with what is judged to be good or bad in the judgment of God Almighty.¹⁶⁶

In the statement just quoted, al-Juwainī appears to have loosened himself from the grip of the Ash‘arite theory and joined ranks, or nearly so with the Maturidites, since he has acknowledged that, with or without the Lawgiver’s rulings, there are sources of harm and benefit which people recognize and among which they distinguish by virtue of logic and common sense, a process which leads them necessarily to avoid the former and seek out the latter. And herein lies the meaning of the statement that ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ are

rationally discernible properties.

Al-Juwaynī had no choice but to extend this degree of recognition to the human ability to recognize good and bad, a number of Shafi‘ites – who were also Ash‘arites, of course – have been known for their frank disagreement with the Ash‘arite theory; such thinkers have defended the affirmation of goodness and evil as rationally discernible properties and the human ability to recognize them by means of the faculty of reason. Ibn al-Qayyim states,

The Shafi‘ite imams who have taken this position include the great fiqh scholar, Imam Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘il, who went to great lengths to affirm it. Indeed, he employs it as the basis for his book, *Mahāsin al-Shari‘ah* in which he expounds it with mastery. Imam Sa‘id ibn ‘Alī al-Zanjānī was vehement in his criticism of Abū al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī for his denial of *al-tahṣīn wa al-taqbīh* and for taking this position when no one before him had done so. Others who were critical of the Ash‘arite theory include Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Halīmī, and countless others.¹⁶⁷

Among the Shafi‘ite scholars who are not mentioned by Ibn al-Qayyim – nor by Ibn al-Subkī in the passage to be quoted from him below – is Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, who exerted great efforts to counter the Ash‘arite perspective. He writes:

Most sources of earthly benefit and harm are discernible through human reason. Hence, there is no sensible person – even before the revelation of the divine Law – who would fail to realize that the attainment of pure benefit and the prevention of pure harm, whether for one’s own sake or for someone else’s, is a praiseworthy, desirable thing. There is universal agreement among the wise and prudent, as well as among the various divinely revealed Laws, on the sacredness of human life, chastity, material wealth and honor... and wherever disagreement has occurred, this has most often been due to differences of priority and degree.¹⁶⁸

However, denial that benefit and harm, or righteousness and cor-

ruption, are attributable to actions or that these can be discerned to a significant degree through human reason alone, is not only unreasonable, but an expression of disregard for the explicit message of untold numbers of texts from Islamic Law itself. The Qur'an has commanded us to do good and to conduct ourselves in righteousness and kindness while forbidding us to engage in evil, corruption or what would be counter to reason; it has commanded us to act with justice and charity while forbidding shameful conduct and envy. Not only this, but it informs us that it has declared lawful that which is good and wholesome while declaring unlawful that which is baneful and injurious. If these commands and prohibitions had not conveyed meanings which would be recognized by those to whom they were addressed, there would have been no use in issuing them. Who would deny that at the time when people were addressed with these precepts, they were fully capable of comprehending their import and significance? And who would deny that they were addressed with these words on the assumption that this understanding would be present? Indeed, they fully appreciated what they were hearing, and as a consequence, they realized that anyone who would command goodness and righteousness and prohibit evil and corruption without violating any of his own precepts could not possibly be a deceiver. And it was on this basis that a number of the most upstanding Arabs took the initiative to embrace Islam simply because they so fully appreciated the truth and righteousness which it called for, as well as the error and corruption which it prohibited.

In a hadith related by Ibn Mājah on the authority of 'Alī we read that, "God commanded His Prophet to present His message to the Arab tribes. Hence, he went and stood before the elders' council of Shaybān ibn Tha'labah during the [pilgrimage] season, calling upon them to embrace Islam and to lend him their support. One of the elders by the name of Mafrūq ibn 'Amrū asked him, 'To what exactly are you calling us, O brother of Quraysh?' In response, the Prophet recited to him the words, 'Behold, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men; and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all

this] in mind' (Qur'an, 16:90). The elder replied, saying, 'If so, then you are most certainly calling us to the most noble of morals and the most virtuous of deeds, and those who have disbelieved and opposed you are deceivers'."¹⁶⁹ It was with this same appreciation for Islam's call to truth and justice that al-Tufayl ibn 'Amrū al-Dawsī, leader of the Daws tribe, embraced Islam. He relates the story of his conversion, saying, "...The Messenger of God presented Islam to me and recited the Qur'an in my hearing. And I tell you truly, never in my life had I heard words more excellent, nor precepts more just. Hence, I surrendered to God in Islam and uttered the testimony of truth..."¹⁷⁰

The Qur'an addressed its hearers with truth and commanded them to act justly, rebuking them for practices which were contrary to reason and condemning the falsehood in which they were living. And for their part, they hastened to embrace the goodness which they had heard and whose beauty and munificence they could sense. As for those who dragged their feet, hesitated or shunned the message altogether, it was because defensiveness and pride had kept them in bondage to their wrongdoing, while their egos and personal inclinations held sway over their better judgment. Qatādah, the second-generation Qur'anic commentator, has been quoted as saying,

There is no virtue which was practiced and approved in the pre-Islamic era but that God commands it in this verse.¹⁷¹ Nor is there a vice for which they were accustomed to reviling each other but that He prohibits and condemns it. For God forbids all immorals .¹⁷²

When the Messenger of God received pledges of allegiance from a group of women after the conquest of Makkah, he did so based on the following conditions as stipulated by God Almighty:

O Prophet! Whenever believing women come unto thee to pledge their allegiance to thee, [pledging] that [henceforth] they would not ascribe divinity in any way to aught but God, and would not steal, and would not commit adultery, and would not kill their children, and would not indulge in slander, falsely devising it out of nothingness, and would not

disobey thee in anything [that thou declarest to be] right – then accept their pledge of allegiance and pray to God to forgive them their [past] sins: for, behold, God is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Grace. (Qur'an, 60:12)

In this context, Hind bint 'Utbah (Abū Sufyān's wife) came and pledged her allegiance to the Prophet based on these conditions, one after another. And when he declared to her the condition that she must "not indulge in slander, falsely devising it out of nothingness," she said, "Indeed, slander is a reprehensible thing, and what you enjoin upon us is nothing but right guidance and the noblest of morals."¹⁷³

Let us also recall and reflect on the memorable stance taken by that great woman, Mother of the Believers Khadījah bint Khuwaylid about which we read in the account of how the revelation first came to the Prophet. The Messenger of God came home to her one day in a state of terrible fright over the revelation he had just received, relating to her what had happened to him with the words, "I fear for myself!" to which Khadījah replied, "Fear not for yourself! Rather, be of good cheer. For truly, God will never put you to shame. And truly, you are destined to reunite kith and kin, speak words of truth, bear the burdens of all, come to the aid of the needy, receive guests with hospitality, and assist [others in enduring] misfortune."¹⁷⁴

Reflection on this situation and these words has led me to three observations, all of which bear witness to the reality of 'goodness' and 'badness' as rationally discernable properties: (1) The Prophet had been graced with these moral virtues prior to receiving divine revelation or being sent out as a prophet. Moreover, he himself had judged these qualities to be desirable by virtue of his sound mind and his uncorrupted nature. (2) Khadījah likewise judged these qualities and actions to be good and desirable and was pleased with these aspects of her husband's character and conduct, viewing them as examples of his noble morals and virtues. Moreover, she did not rely in this assessment on any sort of legal ruling. (3) Khadījah was certain that such conduct could only be met with divine love and approval, and that the person who had conducted himself in such a

manner was bound to receive sustenance, honor and the finest reward from God Almighty.

I wonder what response would be offered by those who deny ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ as rationally discernible properties to the way in which God Almighty describes a number of specific things and actions, as, for example, His description of intoxicants, games of chance, idolatrous practices and the divining of the future as “a loathsome evil” (Qur'an, 5:90), His description of adultery as “an abomination and an evil way” (17:32), or His description of women's menses as “a vulnerable condition” (2:222). The question here is: Did the aforementioned entities and actions meet these same descriptions before the revelation of the text of the Qur'an and from the time they came into being? Or did they only take on these qualities after the text caused them to do so? God Almighty does not tell us that intoxicants and games of chance have become “a loathsome evil,” that adultery has become “an abomination and an evil way,” or that women's menses have become “a vulnerable condition.” Rather, He informs us of what they already are, on the basis of which He cautions us against them and prohibits them.

Hence, the corruption caused by intoxicants and games of chance, the abominable nature of adultery, and the vulnerability of a woman experiencing menstrual flow are all realities which existed before the Law was revealed, and which have continued to exist since then. It is not, as Ibn Ḥazm has claimed – and in which claim he is in full agreement with the Ash'arites despite his vehement opposition to them – that “prior to the Qur'anic prohibition of them, games of chance were not known to cause enmity among people or to have caused anyone to lose his senses. On the contrary, they were known to be fully consonant with people's natures and needs!” Similarly in the case of intoxicants, Ibn Ḥazm holds that prior to being prohibited by Islamic Law, they were not a cause of corrupt morals for those who imbibed in them. “On the contrary, we find that many people weep when they are drunk, constantly remembering the afterlife and death, fearing Hell, glorifying God Almighty and praying to Him for the ability to repent and receive forgiveness. We find that such people, when intoxicated, become noble-minded and magnanimous,

while a great deal of their foolishness departs from them and they cease to pose any danger to others”!¹⁷⁵

In days of old, polytheists justified the abominable practices in which they engaged by stating that they had been adhered to by their forebears, and that God had commanded them to do so as well. In response, God rebukes them, saying, “Say, ‘Never does God enjoin deeds of abomination. Would you attribute unto God something of which you have no knowledge?’ Say, ‘My Sustainer has [but] enjoined the doing of what is right....’” (Qur'an, 7:28-29). Commenting on this passage, Imam Ibn Taymiyah states,

In the context of rebuking them, God declares concerning Himself that He does not enjoin acts of abomination. On this basis we know that it would not be possible for Him to enjoin such acts; moreover, this impossibility could not attain unless such acts were, in and of themselves, evil. This is the declaration of someone who affirms that the properties of ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ inhere in the acts themselves. Moreover, this same affirmation would be made by the majority of scholars.¹⁷⁶

Ibn Ashur states,

God's declaration, “Say, ‘Never does God enjoin deeds of abomination,’” is a refutation of their allegation that God has commanded them to engage in such acts, that is, in acts of abomination. It is a response to them, an instruction for them, and a means of rousing them out of their self-deception, for God is characterized by perfection; hence, He would not command that which is an imperfection and which would thus never be approved or accepted by people of discernment and wisdom. An act's being an abomination is sufficient to demonstrate that God would not enjoin it, since God is the Possessor of supreme perfection.¹⁷⁷

He also states, “Such acts were thus characterized as being abominations before the Law was revealed.”¹⁷⁸

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah has written eloquently on this topic in

his book, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah wa Manshūr Walāyat al-‘Ilm wa al-Irādah*. In addition to numerous other pieces of textual evidence which he both cites and explicates, Ibn al-Qayyim quotes the words of God Almighty in which He describes the Prophet as one who will “make lawful to them the good things of life and forbid them the bad things” (Qur'an, 7:157). Commenting on this passage, he states,

This is an explicit declaration that those things permitted [by the Prophet] were among ‘the good things of life’ before he expressly permitted them, and that those things forbidden were among ‘the bad things’ before he forbade them. The ‘goodness’ of the former and the ‘badness’ of the latter are not derived from the fact of the former’s being permitted and the latter’s being forbidden, and concerning this two observations are in order. The first aspect has to do with the fact that this [i.e., the Prophet’s making lawful the good things of life and forbidding the bad things] is one of the signs of prophethood on the basis of which God is urging the People of the Book to acknowledge and follow him. He speaks of “those who shall follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet whom they shall find described in the Torah that is with them, and [later on] in the Gospel: [the Prophet] who will enjoin upon them the doing of what is right and forbid them the doing of what is wrong, and make lawful to them the good things of life and forbid them the bad things, and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them [aforetime]” (Qur'an, 7:157). Now, if the ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ of these things were based solely upon his having permitted or forbidden them, this would not serve as any sort of proof of his prophethood. Rather, it would be like saying, “He makes lawful to them that which is lawful, and he forbids them that which is forbidden!” This, of course, would be invalid [as evidence in favor of his special status], since it would prove nothing. As for the second aspect: We have seen that he made lawful that which was already good in and of itself; by thus declaring it lawful, he vested in it still another level of goodness, thereby causing it to be good in both respects.¹⁷⁹

If you think carefully on this, it will reveal to you the secrets of the Law and enable you to perceive its beauties and perfection, its brilliance and

grandeur. It will thus become clear to you that, in the wisdom of the Wisest of those who judge, it would have been impossible for the Law to take any form but the one which it has taken. Indeed, God is far above all that does not befit His Glory and perfection. “Say, ‘Verily, my Sustainer has forbidden only shameful deeds, be they open or secret, and [every kind of] sinning, and unjustified envy, and the ascribing of divinity to aught beside Him – since He has never bestowed any warrant therefor from on high – and the attributing unto God of aught of which you have no knowledge.’” (Qur'an, 7:33) This is further evidence that such deeds are shameful in and of themselves and would thus not be approved by any reasonable person. Hence, they have been forbidden due to their shameful ness.¹⁸⁰

If the truth be told, the Ash'arites who have denied 'goodness' and 'badness' as rationally discernible properties which inhere in things and actions have been carried along by the force of the longstanding, contentious debate between them and their Mu'tazilite opponents. Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī, who was the first person to declare this perspective, had once been a member of Mu'tazilite circles, after which he had broken with them. Consequently, it may be said that the Ash'arite theory first emerged out of struggle and thrived by virtue of this same struggle. As the days, years and, indeed centuries passed, this struggle only grew fiercer and more intractable, while 'reaction' against the Mu'tazilites was such a dominant feature of Ash'arite thought that opposition to the Mu'tazilites became a kind of 'personal obligation' for every Ash'arite thinker!

Hence, when some Ash'arites fell short of fulfilling this obligation, they were criticized and spoken of as not having a strong foothold in scholastic theology. An example of such a departure from the norm is some Ash'arites' agreement with the Mu'tazilites' statement that "gratitude to the Bestower of Blessings is a duty which is discernible through human reason." Ibn al-Subkī states,

This position has likewise been taken by some of our companions, including al-Šayrafi, Abū al-Abbās, Ibn Surayj, al-Qaffāl al-Kabīr, Ibn Abī Hurayrah, al-Qādī Abū Hāmid, and others. Al-Qādī in his *al-*

Taqrib, Abū Ishaq in his *Uṣūl*, and Abū Muḥammad al-Juwainī in his *Sharḥ al-Risālah* make apologies for those of our companions who have expressed agreement with the Mu'tazilites by stating that they do not have a solid foothold in scholastic theology. Perhaps they read some of the Mu'tazilites' books and approved of the statement that "gratitude to the Bestower of Blessings is a duty which is discernible through human reason," then proceeded to adopt it, unaware of the fact that it arises from the principles of determinism.¹⁸¹

Still another example of the peculiar effects to which contentions and struggles can lead is that we find even Imam al-Ghazalī – the giant of Islamic thought – expressing fear and caution lest the Mu'tazilite influence attributed to those mentioned above be attributed to him as well. For just at the point where he is about to state expressly that human reason is able to discern that which is beneficial, he reverts to cautious phrasing. In connection with the necessity of preserving human life, he writes, "Even if divinely inspired laws had not been revealed, human reason would sense this necessity and rule in its favor. Moreover, this principle is one which – according to those who affirm the human mind's ability to recognize things as good or bad – no law can disregard."¹⁸² And even if we say that God, Glorious and Exalted is He, is free to do as He wishes with His servants and that He is not obliged to guard righteousness (*ṣalāḥ*) by providing the conditions conducive to obedience to His commands, neither do we deny that human reason inclines toward the notion of benefit and harm..." He then continues – and here we reach the main point – saying, "We have pointed this out lest we be associated with the Mu'tazilites' belief. Those who seek right guidance will not be offended at what I am saying for fear of being besmirched by an abandoned doctrine, condemnation for which is instilled in the hearts and minds of all those who adhere to orthodox Muslim belief. Hence, let it be believed – based on this interpretation¹⁸³ – that human reason leads to forcible prevention of murder through *al-qiṣāṣ*, or the law of retribution."¹⁸⁴ That is to say, human reason approves of the law of retribution as a means of preserving human life and as a way of forcibly preventing attacks upon it, even

if there is no law which prescribes such a punishment.

In the above quotation by Ibn al-Subkī, he mentions the names of some Ash‘arites who agreed with the Mu‘tazilites in respect to certain aspects of the question under discussion, noting that later Ash‘arites felt the need to apologize on their behalf; in other words, they sought to make excuses for them. Now, however, we need to apologize on behalf of those who denied self-evident truths and defended illusions and fantasies simply in order to vex and contradict the Mu‘tazilites. One excuse with which one might defend them is that most Ash‘arite writings limit the dispute over this question to the exchanges which took place between the Ash‘arites on one hand, and on the other, Mu‘tazilites who held particular views, as a result of which the student (reading such texts) would be alienated from the Mu‘tazilites in view of their (apparent) excesses and bad reputation and find himself with no choice but to adopt and defend the Ash‘arites’ views. This difficulty is pointed out also by Muhammad Bakhit al-Muti‘i, then-Mufti of Egypt and a Ḥanafite, who writes,

Indeed, most Shafi‘ite books dealing with the fundamentals of jurisprudence lack any detail relating to Ḥanafite teaching. Instead, they simply attribute the claim that goodness and evil may be discerned through human reason to the Mu‘tazilites despite the fact that many of the Shafi‘ites who have passed on Ḥanafite teachings have chosen the ‘middle’ position held by most Ḥanafites, since it is attested to by the Qur‘an and the Sunnah.¹⁸⁵

Perhaps their most cogent excuse, or argument, is that affirming the ability of human reason to discern good and evil, that is, its ability to recognize sources of benefit and harm, opens the door for atheists and those who deny prophethood to claim that there is no need for either the sending of messengers or the Law, since human reason renders them superfluous. There have, in fact, been those who make this claim, such as the Brahmins, certain philosophers, and others. Among them are those who claim that there is no need for a Law or a Lawgiver other than human reason, while others hold that such things are needed by simple, common folk but not by the

intellectual elite.¹⁸⁶ According to this view, acknowledgment of human reason's ability to recognize good and evil opens the door either to unending dissent and temptation, or to dissent and temptation which 'end' with a repudiation of the religion and its Law.

Now, although this concern is realistic to a certain extent, it should not lead us to disregard the facts. For falsehood cannot be refuted by means of falsehood, just as the truth cannot be defended through denial of the truth. Such an approach, on the contrary, merely leads to the weakening of the truth and the strengthening of falsehood. The claim that affirmation of human reason's ability to discern good and evil leads to the conclusion that one can do without the religion and its Law is disproved by the following three points:

1. It is reason itself which leads to belief in the prophets and the message they have brought as the undeniable truth. This is the firm foundation for the necessity of following the prophets and their Law, that is, inward conviction and certainty concerning the prophets' veracity and their having been sent by the Lord of the Worlds. Hence, a reasonable person has no real choice but to recognize and submit to the indisputable evidence and proofs of the Apostle's veracity.
2. Reason itself leads to the conviction that the content of Islamic Law preserves human interests in the most perfect manner. Even if it does not perceive this in detail, it nevertheless perceives it in an overall sense. Moreover, it may be observed in the cases of those who study the Law that the more profound and thorough their understanding of it becomes, the more fully they appreciate its beauties and the consummate manner in which it preserves human interests, from the most general to the most specific.
3. The affirmation that sources of benefit and harm can be discerned by human reason does not mean that human reason's perception of things is perfect or complete. On the contrary, human reason is capable of realizing some things and not realizing others; some

of its perceptions are accurate, while others are mistaken. This point is expounded by Ibn al-Qayyim, who writes,

The most that human reason can do is to perceive in general terms the goodness or evil of those things which are detailed by the Law. Hence, human reason perceives such things in general, while the Law clarifies them in detail. The mind is able, for example, to perceive the goodness of justice; however, it may not be capable of discerning whether such-and-such an act is just or unjust in each and every situation. Similarly, it is incapable of discerning the goodness or evil of each and every action. Divinely revealed laws come to detail and clarify such matters, and in the case of those things which the mind perceives distinctly, the Law comes to confirm them. If there are actions which are good at one time but evil at another and if the mind is unable to distinguish between the times when they are good and the times when they are evil, the Law clarifies the matter by enjoining them at the times when they are good and prohibiting them at the times when they are evil. Similarly, a given act may involve both benefit and harm, yet human reason may not know whether the benefit entailed by the action is greater than the harm, or vice-versa. In such a situation, the mind hesitates; hence, the Law brings clarity by enjoining that which brings greater benefit than harm and forbidding that which brings greater harm than benefit. Similarly, a given action may bring benefit to one person, but harm to another without the mind's realizing to which person it is beneficial and to which person it is harmful. In such a situation, the Law eliminates the confusion by enjoining the action for those to whom it is beneficial and by forbidding it to those for whom it would be harmful. Or, this or that action might appear to be harmful, yet in reality, bring great benefit which the mind can only perceive with the aid of the Law; examples of this type of action include engaging in jihad and bloodshed for God's sake. Some other action, by contrast, might appear to be beneficial yet, in reality, bring great harm which the mind cannot perceive; hence, the Law makes clear the benefit and/or harm brought by this or that action.

At the same time, what reason fails to perceive by way of the goodness

or evil of specific actions is no less than what it is capable of perceiving. Hence, there is a clear need for messengers sent by God; indeed, there is nothing which the world needs more than God's messengers, may blessings be upon them all.¹⁸⁷

Al-Shātibī deals repeatedly with the inadequacy of the mind's ability to discern sources of benefit and harm, and in support of this point he frequently cites the example of the peoples to whom no prophet had been sent, and who fell into confusion, miscalculation and misguided conduct. Al-Shātibī notes that "with their minds they perceived things which were in agreement [with the Law] and which the Law both confirmed and corrected...However, by comparison with the things they failed to perceive correctly, these were quite few. Consequently, they were both excused [for their errors] and warned, and God sent the prophets."¹⁸⁸

The inadequacy of human reason is attested to by the fact that any one of us might, at a given time, believe that he or she has fully investigated a certain matter, or that he or she has acquired exhaustive experience and understanding of it, only to find after some time has passed that he or she is discovering or coming to understand aspects of this same reality which he or she had not been aware of before.¹⁸⁹ In addition, there are things our estimation of which is influenced by our personal inclinations, instincts and desires in such a way that we are unable to see them as they really are or the final effects to which they will lead: "How many pleasures are viewed by human beings as benefits, whereas they are deemed the very opposite by the rulings of the Law? Such is the case with adultery, partaking of intoxicants, and all [other] forms of immoral conduct which relate to the fulfillment of some immediate objective."¹⁹⁰ Hence, "the interests upon which human well-being rests are known fully to none but their Creator and Establisher; as for human beings, they know only some aspects thereof."¹⁹¹

At this point al-Shātibī makes reference to Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām,¹⁹² who states unconditionally that sources of earthly benefit and harm are recognized on the basis of human necessities, experiences, customs, beliefs, and sound, commonly acknowledged suppo-

sitions, and that whoever wishes to recognize the occasions for benefit and harm and to identify those which are more or less probable must consult his own reason if no mention of them is made in the Law, then base his rulings on this. Hardly will one find a legal judgment which departs from this rule with the exception of those having to do with forms of worship which have no rationally discernible basis and which are, therefore, to be adhered to in unquestioning submission.

Commenting on this view al-Shāṭibī states,

It is not as he says in every respect. Rather, it is accurate in some respects, but not in others. For if things were as he describes them without exception, there would be no need for the Law to promote anything but the interests which pertain to the life to come. However, this is not the case, since the Law has come to establish human affairs in both this life and the next. In this connection, it has promoted untold numbers of [beneficial] behaviors and eliminated forms of corruption which were prevalent at that time. Common experience precludes the possibility that human reason could perceive in detail that which is of earthly benefit or harm, unless what this person means to say is that knowledge of these things is acquired through experience and the like after the Law has established their principles, since of this there can be no doubt.¹⁹³

4. Lastly, no matter how capable people may be of perceiving and assessing what is beneficial and harmful for them – and we have just seen how limited this capability is – they remain in need of powerful religious motivations which will reinforce their commitment on the practical level to preserving their interests and avoiding that which is harmful. After all, religion, given the Source from which it springs, provides a certainty and confidence in the process of discerning good and evil which would rarely be afforded by reason alone. Moreover, by adding a sense of reverence and submission to God to the process of achieving benefit and preventing harm, religion imparts an air of sacredness and seriousness to life which nothing else could. By virtue of its otherworldly dimension as embodied in its teachings concerning reward and

punishment and its divinely inspired ‘carrot-and-stick’ approach, religion provides additional incentives for people to engage in righteous, constructive action and to avoid corruption and harm; this, too, is something which only religion can provide, through both its doctrine and its law.

It is for these reasons that the preservation of religion is the interest given highest priority in Islamic Law, since it is, after all, the fountainhead of all benefits both in this world and the next. At this point someone might ask: If the ability to distinguish between good and evil by means of human reason is faulty and inadequate to this extent, and if the Law’s judgment is the truth “which no falsehood can approach from before or behind it,” then of what use to us is the rational discernment of good and evil, benefit and harm? And what need do we have for this long defense of it? It is to this question that we now turn.

The Areas in which Reason May Be Used to Assess Interests

Before mentioning what these areas are, it should be pointed out that what I mean when I speak of ‘reason’ is the sum total of perceptive powers possessed by human beings – sometimes referred to as innate intuition, experience, or thought – along with the knowledge which these powers make possible in any given realm of experience. In what follows I will discuss the most prominent areas in which reason may be employed in the discernment and assessment of sources of benefit and harm:

1. Interest-Based Textual Interpretation

Some people may be wary of the phrase, “interest-based textual interpretation.” Realizing this to be the case, let me begin by saying that in using this phrase, I am simply recognizing a practice which is well established among virtually all scholars of Islamic jurisprudence with the exception of the Zahirites. What I mean by this is that

jurisprudents' interpretations of Islamic texts and the inferences which they draw from them rest upon a derivation of the meanings, wise purposes and interests which the Law seeks to achieve and guard. This process is bound to have an effect on the manner in which a given text is understood, how it is used, and the conclusions which are derived from it; a text might be interpreted in such a way that it yields a meaning which differs from its apparent sense, its meaning might be narrowed or restricted, or it might be understood in a generalized sense despite the fact that, taken at face value, it applies only to a particular individual, group, or set of circumstances.

The role of reason here is embodied in attempts to identify the interest which the text is intended to achieve – if it is not stated explicitly, of course – and to interpret the text in a manner which is consistent with the achievement of this interest. In the course of such efforts, due attention must be given to the various sources of benefit and harm which have some bearing on the theme of the text in question. One approach to this process of *ta‘līl*, as we have noted earlier, is what is known as “the appropriateness method.” A fundamentally rational approach, this method serves as the foundation for untold numbers of independent rulings, analogies, and inferences, each of which is a type of interest-based interpretation of the text in question. In his book, *Nazariyat al-Maṣlaḥah fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, Husayn Hamid Hassan explains this method, saying,

The Lawgiver may issue a ruling on a given situation or action without the text's making explicit mention of the interest which it was intended to achieve. However, the jurisprudent will find that in order to understand the text and clarify its content and sphere of application, he must identify this interest. Hence, he engages in independent reasoning in order to acquaint himself with this interest (or wise purpose, basis, or suitable cause). In this process, he is guided by what he knows of the general nature of the Law and its rulings, the spirit of the Law and its explicitly stated bases, as well as its principles or the interests deduced therefrom. Then, once he has identified this wise purpose or interest, he interprets the text and specifies its sphere of application in light thereof.¹⁹⁴

This approach derives its legitimacy from the unanimously agreed upon recognition that Islamic Law was established in order to preserve human interests, and that the established method of dealing with its rulings is, as we have mentioned, that of interest-based interpretation.

Examples of this practice are innumerable, and wherever one turns in books on Islamic jurisprudence one finds interest-based interpretations and interest-based uses of texts from both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. One such example relates to the prophetic hadith passed down on the authority of Anas on the subject of pricing. Anas states, "During the days of the Prophet, prices began to rise exorbitantly. Hence, some people came and said, 'O Messenger of God, set the prices for us.' In response he said, 'God is the One who takes away and who gives abundantly, the Provider, the Price-setter. My hope is that when I meet God, no one will demand recompense for any injustice I have committed against him with regard to either blood or money.'"¹⁹⁵

What one concludes from this hadith is that pricing is an injustice, and that as a consequence, no ruler has the right to set prices for his subjects; rather, the matter of prices is in God's hands and no human being has the right to interfere in it. One might also conclude from this hadith that no distinction is to be made between one instance of pricing and another. Nevertheless, a number of jurisprudents – particularly among the Malikites and the Hanbalites – have ruled that there are cases in which pricing is permissible, or even obligatory! This is none other than an interest-based interpretation of the hadith based on rational inquiry. The scholars who have dealt with this hadith are of the view that it considers price-setting to be an injustice; however, they then identify cases in which it is precisely the failure to set prices which is an injustice, while the setting of prices is, on the contrary, an act of justice which serves the public interest. Hence, the hadith has been understood to apply only to specific cases of price-setting, and not to situations in which price-setting would be appropriate. As for situations of the latter type, they are addressed by other texts which forbid injustice and the arbitrary disposal of others' rights while enjoining fairness and the proper balance among

people's various interests.

Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī states, “The proper practice is that of setting prices and regulating affairs in accordance with a Law which involves injustice against no one. What the Prophet said is truth, and what he did was the judgment [of a wise leader]. However, this judgment applied to a people who were proven and steadfast and who had surrendered themselves to their Lord. However, in the case of those who aspire to oppress others and consume what is theirs, God’s rule is farther reaching and His judgment more austere.”¹⁹⁶

Ibn al-Qayyim comments on this matter, saying,

As for price-setting, there are situations in which it is unjust and prohibited, and others in which it is just and permissible. If it wrongs people and forces them without good cause to sell at a price which they do not approve, or if it deprives them of that which God has declared permissible to them, it is to be prohibited. If, on the other hand, price-setting promotes fairness among people by, for example, obliging them to pay the amount which they owe in accordance with a commutative contract and preventing them from taking more than what they have a right to in accordance with the same, it is permissible, nay, a necessity. [Price-setting is likewise necessary in situations in which] commodity owners only agree to sell their goods – despite people’s need for them – for a price which is higher than their known value, and in which it is their duty to sell the goods for prices that reflect their actual value. In cases such as these, price-setting is a means of obliging people to conduct themselves with the fairness that God requires of them.¹⁹⁷

In the same vein we have several authentic hadiths which contain a prohibition of *bay’ al-gharar*,* that is, sales which involve some degree of uncertainty or risk. In one such hadith we read that, “The Messenger of God forbade *bay’ al-gharar*, as well as *bay’ al-haṣāḥ*.”¹⁹⁸

Al-Shāṭibī states,

The Prophet prohibited *bay’ al-gharar*, of which he made mention of particular examples such as the sale of fruits before they are ripe, the sale of *ḥabl al-ḥabalah* (that is, the unborn offspring of a fetus now

present in the womb of a pregnant animal), *bay^c al-ḥaṣāḥ*, etc. If we interpret these prohibitions in a narrow sense, it will be impossible for us to sell many things which it is acceptable to buy and sell, such as walnuts, almonds and chestnuts in their shells, wood and things which are still underground, as well as all varieties of *maqāthī*.¹⁹⁹ It would not be correct to say that it is forbidden to buy and sell such things, since the type of *gharar* which is prohibited includes only those goods in relation to which reasonable people would have difficulty knowing with certainty whether they are sound or flawed. For its application is determined not by the words' literal meaning, but by human interests.²⁰⁰

Among the texts which most call for interest-based interpretation are those of a general, unqualified nature such as the command to act with justice and kindness and assist one's near of kin, and the prohibition against envy and the harming of others. For although there are texts which detail such commands and prohibitions, they nevertheless apply to so many situations that they could not possibly all be enumerated, nor could the cases explicitly mentioned in certain texts be inclusive of all situations to which they apply. Consequently, there is ample room for independent reasoning and investigation when it comes to applying these general texts. On this point al-Shāṭibī states,

Every legal text which is comprehensive and unqualified and for which no specific rule or criterion has been drawn up must have some rationally discernible, humanly identifiable basis. This type of text most often has to do with matters which are ordinary and straightforward: In the realm of that which is commanded, they deal with things such as justice, kindness, pardon, patient endurance and gratitude, and in the realm of things prohibited, with things such as injustice, that which is shameful and counter to reason, envy, and unfaithfulness to covenants.²⁰¹

When it comes to applying such texts determining what falls under their jurisdiction and what does not, and specifying the numbers and quantities required in relation to commands and the manner in

which they are to be carried out – there is ample room for reliance on reason and consideration for human interests. Commenting on another text, al-Shātibī clarifies an aspect of this point, saying,

On the level of verbal content, commands and prohibitions all communicate equally the message that something is required. Hence, the distinction between commands which indicate that an action is obligatory and those which indicate that it is merely recommended, and between prohibitions which indicate that an action is forbidden and those which indicate that it is simply undesirable, will not be found entirely in the texts themselves. Rather, most such distinctions will become clear only with reference to the objectives of the texts concerned and by an examination of relevant human interests and their degree of importance or urgency.²⁰²

This point might be illustrated with reference to the matter of disseminating knowledge among people. There are large numbers of texts which call for and urge the dissemination of knowledge by way of both encouragement and warning. Taken as a whole, such texts indicate that it is the duty of those who possess knowledge to spread their knowledge and to impart it to those who need it. However, an interest-based perspective indicates that teaching others may be either an individual or a collective obligation; similarly, it may be obligatory in some situations, but only recommended in others depending on the type and importance of the knowledge as well as the situation of the learner and the degree to which he needs the knowledge in question. In fact, the Prophet is reported to have avoided teaching his Companions in excess. We read, for example, in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd used to preach a sermon every Thursday. A certain man then said to him, “Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān, I wish you would preach to us every day.” ‘Abd Allāh replied, “The reason I don’t is that I do not wish to weary you. I deal with you as we used to be dealt with by the Prophet, who would preach to us only on certain days lest it become burdensome to us.”

In addition, there might be types of knowledge which, for the sake of people’s well-being, should not be disseminated among all under

certain circumstances. A number of the Companions – under instructions from the Prophet – refrained from repeating the teaching they had heard from him to the effect that if anyone dies without having associated any partners with God, God will forbid the Fire to touch him. They withheld this teaching from others for fear that if people heard it, they would give up their striving to do good works; instead, they would speak to people of it only when they were on the verge of death lest the hadith be lost altogether. It is related in *Sahīh Muslim* on the authority of 'Ubādah ibn al-Śāmit, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal and Abū Hurayrah that it was 'Umar who forbade him (Abū Hurayrah) to inform people of this teaching, and that this prohibition was approved by the Messenger of God. Al-Nawawī states, "This hadith tells us that it is permissible to withhold certain types of knowledge for which there is no need, the purpose for this being either to preserve people's interests or to prevent harm."²⁰³ Similarly, it is related of Imam Mālik ibn Anas that he disliked speaking of matters which could not serve as the basis for action; moreover, he attributed this same attitude to other scholars who had gone before him.²⁰⁴

Al-Shāṭibī states,

From this it may be concluded that not all true knowledge is meant to be disseminated, even if it has to do with Islamic Law and would serve to increase our understanding of its rulings. Rather, such knowledge may be divided into two categories: (1) that knowledge which is meant to be disseminated, and which includes most knowledge pertaining to Islamic Law, and (2) that which is either not meant to be disseminated at all, or which is not meant to be disseminated in certain circumstances, at a certain time, or among certain people...²⁰⁵ And in fact, he notes, "Islamic scholars have identified specific questions concerning which no legal decisions may be issued even if they are valid in the sight of Islamic jurisprudence..."²⁰⁶

The reason for this being that in view of people's potential mishandling of such matters, their open discussion could result in harm. In view of such considerations, al-Shāṭibī established a criterion by which scholars may distinguish between those types or aspects of

knowledge which should be disseminated and taught to others, and those which should not be, saying,

First lay the matter of concern before the Law; if it is valid by the Law's standards, consider its long-term consequences for the people of your generation and beyond. If its discussion would not lead to harm, then present it in your mind to human reason; if it finds acceptance, then you may speak of it either among lay people or, if it would not be suitable for the general populace, among the elite. However, if the matter of concern to you does not pass these tests, then it is advisable, for the sake of human interests as viewed from the perspective of both Islamic Law and reason, to remain silent about it.²⁰⁷

And thus we see the extent to which a sound understanding of Islamic texts requires the careful, thoughtful use of human reason and insightful, interest-based inquiry.

2. Assessment of Changing and Conflicting Interests

This area, which is an extension of the previous one, includes two points, namely: (1) rational assessment of changing sources of benefit and harm, and (2) rational assessment of conflicting sources of benefit and harm. What is meant by the first point is that, as is well known to all, many interests change with changing times and circumstances; this change, moreover, may have some effect upon the legal rulings which are based on such interests. In dealing with this phenomenon, the interpreter of Islamic Law must be vigilant, insightful, and thorough in his inquiry in order to identify those interests whose conditions have actually changed, and in order to answer the question as to whether this change calls for the review and modification of the relevant legal rulings.

This is undoubtedly a difficult ascent to climb; however, there is no escaping it for scholars who take their task seriously, since otherwise, the objectives of the Law will be lost and, perhaps even its outward forms as well. The failure to confront these dangers and climb this ascent, followed by the closure of this door of *ijtihad*, has

confounded Islamic jurisprudence and impaired its natural progress, rendering it incapable, in many cases, of maintaining its hold on Islamic societies by dealing effectively with the issues and developments of relevance to them, meeting their needs and guarding their interests. As a result, it has contributed – along with other factors, of course – to a process by which many aspects of life, both public and private, have become disconnected from Islamic Law.

It is this which opened the door wide for al-Tūfī long ago, and for others in modern times, to make the illusory claim that Islamic texts may be inconsistent with human interests, in which case it is necessary to give human interests priority over the texts concerned on the pretext that the preservation of human interests is the intent and aim of these texts. Indeed, so keen was al-Tūfī to give first consideration to human interests that he was blinded (to the truth of the situation), saying,

Texts are disparate and inconsistent; hence, it is they which cause disputes among legal rulings – disputes which are blameworthy in the sight of the Law. As for the guarding of human interests, it is an unchanging reality about which there is no dispute; it is this, then, which brings about the agreement for which the Law calls, and it is this which should be afforded the greatest importance.²⁰⁸

Someone who is ignorant of Islamic Law, or who is shallow and hasty in his efforts to acquaint himself with its rulings and the degree of integration and uniformity among them, might be excused if the texts of the Law appear to him to be ‘disparate and inconsistent,’ since this impression reflects the extent of his knowledge and understanding. What further exonerates such an individual is the fact that the texts of the Law are so numerous and varied, dealing with a wide variety of issues and situations and bringing order to a broad multiplicity of themes. They thus require, as we have seen, a great deal of reflection and a sophisticated, interest-based perspective. Otherwise, they will appear to be inconsistent, as will the rulings based on them and their requirements. However, what no sensible person can be excused for is the claim that the guarding of human interests is “an

unchanging reality about which there is no dispute”!

I doubt that al-Ṭūfī ever had a day when his interests did not conflict with those of someone else, or even when his own interests did not conflict among themselves. I doubt that his interests remained, at the end of his life, as they had been in his youth and childhood or, at the very least, that his perspective on these interests remained unchanged. And since such changes and conflicts do occur, how much more would one expect to encounter them on the level of far-flung geographical expanses, succeeding ages, and variable circumstances? I am not denying, of course, that there are some interests which are, indeed, unchanging, or at least, which are characterized by a high degree of stability. It is these interests which make up the cornerstone of human life, such as those represented by rulings pertaining to the Islamic forms of worship, legally prescribed criminal punishments, numerous rulings relating to family life, and others.

Nor, however, can it be denied that there are many sources of benefit and harm which vary with circumstances and life conditions. Their placement on scales of priority change, as does the degree of benefit or harm with which they are associated, all of which calls for renewed inquiry, appropriate assessment and suitable means of undertaking both. All such things, moreover, exercise an influence over legal rulings, an influence which must be investigated and given its proper due. In this way the door is closed to the illusion that Islamic legal texts are inconsistent or incapable of responding to changing human interests.

There are two aspects of life which are in particular need of renewed investigation and assessment. The first of these, which has to do with the preservation of human interests, is that of human transactions based on conventions and habits, while the second, which has to do with the prevention of harm, is the area of discretionary punishments.

This is not the place to discuss changes in interests and legal rulings in response to changing times and circumstances. Rather, I simply wish to draw attention to a broad area which stands in need of a rational assessment of what is good and bad through the appraisal of changing sources of benefit and harm and what they require by

way of appropriate legal rulings. As for a detailed treatment of this issue, I will forego such in the present context, contenting myself instead with references to what has been written on this topic by a number of scholars over the years. Older works include: (1) *Al-Ihkām fī Tamyīz al-Fatāwā min al-Aḥkām wa Taṣarrufāt al-Qāḍī wa al-Imām* by Imam Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī, (2) books such as *A'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn*, *Al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah* and *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, and (3) *Nashr al-'Urf fī anna Ba'd al-Aḥkām Mabnāhā 'Alā al-'Urf* by Muḥammad Amīn ibn 'Ābidīn. There are, in addition, a number of modern writings which treat aspects of this topic. Foremost among these are studies on the concept of *maṣlahah*, that is, 'interest' or 'source of benefit,' such as *ta'līl al-Aḥkām* by Muḥammad Mustafa Shalabi (Chapter Three in particular), *al-Maṣlahah fī al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī wa Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī* by Mustafa Zayd, *Dawābit al-Maṣlahah* by Muḥammad Sa'id Ramadān al-Butī, and *Naẓariyat al-Maṣlahah fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* by Husayn Hamid Hassan. Yusuf al-Qaradawi also deals with this theme in a number of his books and articles, particularly *Shari'at al-Islām* and *al-Ijtihād fī al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyyah*. Also included here would be Umar al-Jaydi's study entitled, "*al-'Urf wa al-'Amal fī al-Madhab al-Mālikī*".

As for the second point mentioned above, namely, rational assessment of conflicting sources of benefit and harm, what is meant by this phrase is the process of determining which source of benefit or harm to give priority over another in the event that they are found to be in conflict, whether in someone's individual experience, in the work of the mufti or *mujtahid*, or in any other situation of relevance. Most everyone will be aware of the constant overlapping and intermingling that takes place among sources of benefit and harm, a phenomenon which gives rise to unending competition and conflict among them as well. There is no source of benefit or harm but that there will be, alongside it, numerous other sources of benefit and harm which compete and conflict with it. There are many cases, of course, in which the issue is clear and it is an easy matter to determine which of the competing or conflicting sources of benefit or harm should be given priority on the basis of either relevant texts or

rational assessment. Even so, however, the number of cases which are not so clear-cut remains far greater. And what complicates matters still further is the fact that many sources of benefit and harm are relative or, as al-Shāṭibī puts it, ‘contingent.’ He states,

Most sources of benefit and harm are not intrinsically beneficial or harmful, but only in a contingent sense. What I mean by the term ‘contingent’ here is that they are beneficial or harmful in some cases but not in others, for some individuals and not for others, and at some times but not at others. For there are many so-called benefits which are actually harmful to people; similarly, they might be harmful at a given time or in a given circumstance but not in another.²⁰⁹

The following are a number of rules which scholars have formulated to aid in prioritizing among conflicting sources of benefit and harm:

- Prevention of harm is to be given priority over the achievement of benefit.
- The lesser of two benefits should be forfeited in order to preserve the greater of the two.
- Collective interests are to be given priority over individual interests.
- A greater harm may be eliminated through a lesser one.
- Harm may not be eliminated by means of similar harm.
- Individual harm may be endured for the sake of preventing collective harm.
- Necessities render the prohibited permissible.
- Necessities are to be assessed accurately and given their proper due.

Moreover, as we have noted, al-Shāṭibī formulated a law of great importance for such prioritizing in a number of situations in which different people’s interests come into conflict.²¹⁰ Imam ʻIzz al-Dīn ibn ʻAbd al-Salām presents more detailed analyses of various instances of prioritizing among various sources of benefit and harm.

Indeed, this topic is the main theme of his book, *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām fī Maṣāliḥ al-Anām*.

Despite all this and more, the fact remains that on the practical level, such questions of prioritizing among sources of benefit and harm call for careful thought, discernment and accurate appraisals in order to determine which of two sources of benefit or harm should be given greater weight, which of two benefits is more valid and of greater importance, which of two evils is the lesser and which the greater, what involves the achievement of benefit as opposed to what involves the prevention of harm, what is necessary as opposed to what is not, what should be viewed as an earthly benefit as opposed to a benefit of the world to come, etc. Such conflicts and questions of prioritization take countless forms and occur in untold varieties of situations, all of which call for assessment and sound analysis, based on reason and careful investigation.

3. Assessment of Unrestricted Interests

Earlier in this chapter, we clarified the meaning of the term ‘unrestricted’ as it is employed in the phrase ‘unrestricted interests,’ in the course of which it became apparent that there is no such thing as a truly ‘unrestricted’ interest in the unqualified or absolute sense. Rather, what are termed ‘unrestricted interests’ are, in reality, interests which are recognized by Islamic Law but which are not mentioned by name in any particular legal texts. Instead, the command to preserve them is implied in what is recognized without question to be the Law’s intent, namely, to preserve human interests. It is likewise contained implicitly in general passages which enjoin the doing of good and the commitment to righteousness. And given the clarity of the Law’s intent, this term becomes clear as well.

In our discussion of the two previous areas – namely, interest-based textual interpretation and the assessment of changing and conflicting interests – we saw the extent to which we need to engage in careful examination and rational assessment even when dealing with those sources of benefit and harm which are mentioned explicitly in Islamic legal texts. How much more, then, will such processes be called for in the process of identifying, assessing and prioritizing

among unrestricted interests?

This category of unrestricted interests is neither small nor insignificant. On the contrary, suffice it to note that what is known as "Islamic legal policy" (*al-siyāsah al-shariyyah*) is based primarily upon the preservation of unrestricted interests. This alone makes it clear that the sphere of unrestricted interests expands with every passing day; it expands with the increasing size and growing needs of the Muslim nation, or Ummah, and with the expansion of the state and the growing number of functions which it performs. Thus it is that unrestricted interests have come to impact the very being and destiny of the Muslim nation: influencing its earthly sustenance, its dignity, and whether it suffers decadence and decline, or enjoys prosperity and progress.

Is it reasonable or acceptable, then, for the management of such major interests to remain isolated from the Law's objectives and standards and from those with specialized knowledge thereof? Is it reasonable or acceptable for the scholars of the Law, with their knowledge of its objectives and principles and their educated points of view, to remain isolated from this area of life which is so vital and critical to the Muslim nation and the law which governs it? Is it reasonable or acceptable for them to remain powerless, intimidated or marginalized from the processes by which the Muslim nation's course and destiny are determined – indeed, deprived of the mere opportunity to take part therein?

Such isolation can never be overcome unless scholars of Islamic Law – equipped with their knowledge of the Law and its explicit rulings – demonstrate a high level of awareness and the ability to accurately assess sources of benefit and harm. They must prove themselves able to put each interest in its proper place, guided by the Law itself and its objectives. This is the proper way in which to preserve the interests of the Muslim nation. Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām states,

Whoever investigates the objectives of the Law as embodied in the achievement of benefit and the prevention of harm will arrive at the conviction or recognition that this or that interest must not be neglected and that this or that source of harm must be avoided. For even if

there is no consensus, text or analogy which deals specifically and explicitly with the source of benefit or harm in question, an understanding of the Law itself necessitates this conclusion.²¹¹

Hence, by means of thorough acquaintance with the rulings and objectives of the Law, awareness of the conditions and requirements of the Muslim nation, careful investigation and rational assessment, it becomes possible to identify unrestricted interests and to arrange them in the proper order of priority. By reflecting on these areas and the need therein to put the mind to work and foment creative thought, it will become clear to us that the divine wisdom requires that human reason and independent thinking be given ample space within which to operate in order to properly function, mature and advance. One of the well-established, overall objectives of Islam is that of enabling human beings to grow in purity. We find, for example, that in no fewer than four passages, the Qur'an explains the sending of the Prophet as having been for this very purpose, saying:

We have sent unto you an apostle from among ourselves to convey unto you Our messages, and to cause you to grow in purity... (2:151)

O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle from among themselves, who shall convey unto them Thy messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom, and cause them to grow in purity. (2:129)

Indeed, God bestowed a favor upon the believers when he raised up in their midst an apostle from among themselves, to convey His messages unto them, and to cause them to grow in purity. (3:164)

He it is who has sent unto the unlettered people an apostle from among themselves, to convey unto them His messages, and to cause them to grow in purity. (62:2)

As I see it – and God knows best – growth in purity likewise involves the purification of one's mind by developing it, guiding it

and putting it to use. This is what the Law does when it works to set our minds in motion and release them from their bonds, freeing them from the delusions and superstitions which impede sound thinking. The Law feeds our minds with its values and precepts, then gives them free rein to work and purify themselves. This is an additional aspect of preservation of the faculty of human reason; after all, the Law's preservation of human reason is not limited to outward measures such as prohibiting intoxicants and imposing penalties for partaking of them. How many a person's mind has been lost without his or her ever having touched a drop of liquor? Indeed, people's minds are lost through ignorance, lethargy, idleness and blind imitation.

Consequently, putting the mind to use and giving it a wide berth is not merely an aid toward the assessment and preservation of human interests; rather, it is, itself, one of the most vital human interests, since the mind's proper use ensures its preservation, and its preservation is one of the agreed-upon essentials.

[III]

By What Means May The Lawgiver's Objectives/Intents Be Known?

As we have mentioned, al-Shāṭibī makes statements throughout *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-I'tiṣām* on the matter of how the objectives of the Law may be ascertained. Moreover, these statements, scattered though they may be, are no less important than what al-Shāṭibī has to say in the Conclusion which he has devoted to this theme. In what follows I shall attempt to gather together and comment on these scattered references so as to synthesize them with the contents of the aforementioned Conclusion.

1. Understanding Objectives in Light of the Requirements of the Arabic Language

As was seen earlier, the second category of the Lawgiver's objectives

according to al-Shāṭibī's division is that of, "the Lawgiver's higher objective in establishing the Law for people's understanding." The questions relating to this category have to do with the manner in which the Lawgiver's higher objectives²¹² may be ascertained, a theme to which we now return.

Al-Shāṭibī opens his discussion of the first question relating to this category with the words, "This blessed Law is conveyed in the Arabic language, and there is no place therein for foreign tongues." In so saying, al-Shāṭibī does not mean to raise the issue of whether the Qur'an contains terms of non-Arabic origin. He explains, "Rather, what we intend to discuss here is the fact that the Qur'an was revealed in the language of the Arabs, as a result of which any attempt to understand it must approach it by means of this language...Whoever wishes to understand it well must do so through the Arabic tongue, apart from which there is no way to pursue this end. This, then, is what is meant by this question."

Hence, the higher objectives of the Law must be viewed in light of the Arabic language in which this Law has been conveyed, and in light of the Arabs' accustomed ways of expressing themselves. We find, for example, that

In their language, [the Arabs] often address others in general statements which are to be taken at face value. In addition, they may speak in general terms which, in one respect, bear a universal message, and in another respect, a particular message addressed to a specific group or individual. At other times they may speak in general terms which are actually addressed to particular individuals, or in terms which bear one meaning on the literal level, and another on the non-literal level. All of this may be discerned from the beginning, the middle, or the end of their words [that is to say, based on the surrounding context]. They employ speech whose opening words help to clarify what will be said at the end, or whose closing words serve to clarify what was said in the beginning. They speak of things which may be understood either through the explicit meaning of their words or by way of allusion. They refer to a single thing by many names, and to many things by a single name. All of these [rhetorical] styles are familiar to them, and neither

they themselves nor those who have grown familiar with their manner of verbal expression would call any of them into question. This being the case, then, the Qur'an – in terms of both meaning and style – can be expected to reflect these same features.²¹³

Al-Shāṭibī's writings contain frequent affirmations of the importance of respecting and abiding by the limits and rules of the Arabic language if one is to understand the objectives behind Islamic legal texts. Indeed, he stresses this notion at every available opportunity, since "it is the Arabic tongue which translates the higher objectives of the Lawgiver."²¹⁴ Hence, he states:

No one can truly understand it [the Law] but those who have a true understanding of the Arabic language, since both follow a single pattern, the only exception to this generalization being the inimitability which is unique to the Qur'an in particular. Whoever is a beginner in his understanding of the Arabic language will likewise be a beginner in his understanding of the Law; similarly, whoever has attained an intermediate understanding of the former will be capable of an intermediate understanding of the latter...²¹⁵

And so on and so forth. Thus, the more accomplished one is in the Arabic language, the more accurately one will perceive the objectives of the Law. In keeping with this perspective, al-Shāṭibī holds that among the major causes behind heresy and deviation from the (Islamic) religion are: (1) ignorance, and (2) an overly sanguine view of human reason and perceptive powers. He states, "As for the matter of ignorance, it sometimes has to do with the tools by means of which the objectives of the Law are understood, while at other times it has to do with the objectives [themselves]."²¹⁶ The tools, or tool, by means of which the objectives of the Law are determined is the Arabic language; "hence, whoever studies or expounds the Law in its roots or its branches must not speak of such things unless he is an Arab, or as the Arabs..."²¹⁷ If these conditions are fulfilled, then it is permissible for such a person to look into the Qur'an²¹⁸ and derive its meanings and objectives. However,

when deriving conclusions and evidence therefrom, [one must adhere to] the Arabs' recognized linguistic approach to determining its meanings and, in particular, the purposes of its various forms of address. There are many people who interpret Qur'anic textual evidence based on the understanding it yields to human reason alone, and not based on the agreed-upon styles of expression which it reflects. However, this approach brings great harm, and is a departure from the Lawgiver's intent.²¹⁹

2. Legal Commands and Prohibitions: Between Ta'lil and Literalism

Commands and prohibitions, viewed linguistically, are intended to communicate a request or demand. A command is a request that a certain action be performed, while a prohibition is a request that an action not be performed. Hence, the party who issues a command intends that the action be performed, while the party who issues a prohibition intends that the action not be performed.

In this discussion I am bringing together two of the four ways in which, in al-Shātibī's view, the Lawgiver's objectives may be determined, namely, (1) consideration of primary, explicit commands and prohibitions, and (2) consideration of the bases for commands and prohibitions. When he describes the commands or prohibitions by means of which we may ascertain the Lawgiver's objectives as 'primary,' al-Shātibī is speaking of that which the Lawgiver enjoins or forbids in and of itself, and not in order to support some other command or prohibition. In other words, that which is enjoined or forbidden reflects a primary intention rather than a secondary one.²²⁰

This distinction may be seen in the words of God Almighty, "O you who have attained to faith! When the call to prayer is sounded on the day of congregation, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave all worldly commerce: this is for your own good, if you but knew it" (Qur'an, 62:9). The first command mentioned here, namely, "hasten to the remembrance of God," is a primary command reflecting a primary intention, since it communicates the Lawgiver's intention to move people to carry out what has been commanded. As

for the second command, namely, “leave all worldly commerce” (which is, at the same time, prohibitive), it is not primary; rather, it is a secondary command whose purpose is to support or reinforce the first one. As such, then, it reflects a ‘secondary intention.’ Consequently, it would not be valid to employ such a command as evidence that the Lawgiver intends to forbid worldly commerce, whereas the first command, by contrast, does convey the Lawgiver’s intention and serves as evidence thereof.

As for the description of a command or prohibition as ‘explicit,’ it is intended to distinguish it from that which is implicit, since whatever is implicit reflects a secondary intention rather than a primary one, and serves to support and confirm those commands and prohibitions which are explicit. Implicit commands encompasses those actions without which explicitly stated obligations cannot be fulfilled. Everything which meets this description is a means rather than an end and as such, reflects a secondary intention rather than a primary one. The command to perform the pilgrimage to Makkah, for example, is explicit, while the command to do whatever is necessary to make the pilgrimage possible is implicit; hence, the former command conveys a primary intention, while the latter conveys a secondary intention.

If commands and prohibitions are primary and explicit, they indicate the Lawgiver’s intention: Commands indicate the intention that the actions commanded be performed, while prohibitions indicate the intention that the actions prohibited not be performed. Al-Shāṭibī states, “This is a literal, general aspect, both for those who consider nothing but the command or the prohibition itself, and for those who give consideration to bases (*‘ilal*) and human interests, the latter of which is the established, legitimate approach.”²²¹ In other words, the process of looking at a command or prohibition alone and viewing it as an expression of the Lawgiver’s intent is common to both literalists and those who engage in *ta‘lil*, that is, those who seek to ascertain the basis for commands and prohibitions. As for the literalist, this is his sole concern, which presents no problem. And as for the one who engages in *ta‘lil*, it may be said that even if he examines the bases and interests underlying legal rulings, these bases and

interests are nevertheless rooted in the commands and prohibitions in question; hence, even considering nothing but commands and prohibitions themselves serves to fulfill the purposes and interests on account of which they were issued.

This does not mean, however, that one should not heed the bases for legal rulings and rely on them in determining the Lawmaker's intentions and understanding the apparent meanings of texts. Rather, al-Shāṭibī states,

If the *'illah* is known, it should be heeded, for whenever it is known, it will be possible to determine what is required by the command or prohibition in question, as well as what is, and is not, its intent. If, on the other hand, the *'illah* is not known, one must cease making definitive pronouncements to the effect that the Lawgiver intends this or that...²²²

Al-Shāṭibī discusses this issue in greater detail in the section devoted to commands and prohibitions in his 'The Book of Rulings' where, after a long, engaging discussion, he concludes that it is necessary to respect and observe the apparent meanings of texts, yet without excess or rigidity, and without disregarding established bases and interests. He states,

Slavish, excessive adherence to texts' apparent meanings is a far cry from faithfulness to the Lawgiver's intention; however, disregard for these meanings is likewise a type of immoderation. Thus, if one conducts himself in accordance with what he understands to be the basis for this or that command or prohibition, he will be proceeding along the right path and be in harmony with the Lawgiver's intention in every respect.²²³

3. Primary and Secondary Objectives of the Law

This division of the objectives of the Law is employed by al-Shāṭibī in numerous places throughout *al-Muwāfaqāt*. Sometimes he uses the terms 'primary objective' (*al-qasd al-auwal*) and 'secondary

objective' (*al-qasd al-thānī*), while at other times he uses a synonymous set of terms, namely, 'principal objective' (*al-qasd al-aṣlī*) and 'subsidiary objective' (*al-qasd al-taba‘ī*). What this division indicates is that legal rulings have fundamental objectives which may be viewed as their primary or supreme purpose, as well as secondary objectives which are subordinate and complementary to those purposes which are more primary and fundamental. Al-Shāṭibī expounds this topic, saying,

An example of this may be seen in marriage, which is legitimate for the primary purpose of procreation. This purpose is followed by things such as the desire to find reassurance and repose in another's presence, partnership as a couple, cooperation in the pursuit of worldly and otherworldly interests, including the enjoyment of licit pleasures and looking upon the beauty which God the Creator has placed in the female sex, receiving benefit from the woman's wealth or from the care and nurture she provides for her husband, the children she or someone else has born to him or his brothers, protection against the temptation to fulfill sexual desires in an illicit manner or look upon someone lustfully, ever more gratitude for God's blessings, and the like. All such things are part of what the Lawmaker intended in sanctioning marriage; some of them receive direct or indirect mention in the Law, while others may be inferred based on other evidence and reflection on those things which do receive explicit mention.

After all, secondary objectives such as these serve to support the primary objective [of marriage], promote its wise purpose, and provide motivation to seek and perpetuate it. They nurture the ongoing sympathy, communication and compassion by means of which the Lawgiver's primary purpose of procreation is fulfilled. And in this we find evidence that whatever is not stated explicitly but which may thus be inferred is likewise intended by the Lawgiver.²²⁴

In the context of discussing the various types of legal rulings on actions, al-Shāṭibī notes the relationship among the various types of rulings, and in particular, the relationship between recommended

and obligatory, and between undesirable and forbidden. On this topic he states,

If you consider the matter, you will find that the undesirable is to the forbidden as the recommended is to the obligatory. [Moreover], the most important obligations are intended [for their own sake], whereas other obligations are a means of achieving the same objective. Such secondary obligations include, for example, the performance of ablutions in order to attain ritual purity, concealing one's private parts, facing the qiblah, as well as issuing the call to prayer in order to inform worshippers that the time period for a given prayer has begun, all of which are expressions of the Islamic faith which serve to support and fulfill the objective of ritual prayer.²²⁵

The duty of ritual prayer vis-a-vis the duties which serve to complete and support it is another example of the manner in which the Lawgiver gives consideration to what serves and supports His primary and most fundamental objectives. And in this one will find support for the affirmation that whatever serves and reinforces an intention of the Lawgiver is likewise His intention, albeit secondarily.

In his premises, al-Shāṭibī illustrates the same principle in his discussion of seeking knowledge and what should and should not be done by those who engage in this pursuit. Al-Shāṭibī considers that the pursuit of knowledge fulfills one of the Lawgiver's primary intentions, namely, that of (instilling within us an attitude of) unquestioning reverence; he also identifies secondary intentions which are fulfilled by this pursuit. He states,

The primary objective has already been mentioned; as for the secondary objectives, they include things which are mentioned by the majority of scholars, such as the fact that knowledge renders its possessor more virtuous and dignified, it gives his words greater influence and credibility, and it commands others' reverence and respect. The reason for this is that the scholar occupies the rank of a prophet among others, since scholars are the prophets' heirs. Also included here are all of the various noble deeds and traits which are attributed to scholars.

None of these things are among the objectives of knowledge as stipulated by the Law, just as they are not among the objectives of worship and devotion; nevertheless, they happen to be among the attainments enjoyed by both the scholar and the devout worshipper of God.²²⁶

Hence, despite the fact that these secondary objectives are not the original intention behind the pursuit of knowledge, they may nevertheless become legitimate, albeit secondary, objectives thereof, since

each of these outcomes will either be in the service of the original intention, or not be in its service. If a given outcome is in the service of the original intention, then its pursuit is valid; God Almighty speaks in praise of those who pray, saying, “O our Sustainer! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes, and cause us to be foremost among those who are conscious of Thee!” (Qur'an, 25:74); He likewise commands Abraham, upon him be peace, for his saying, “and grant me the power to convey the truth unto those who will come after me” (26:84). If, on the other hand, a given outcome is not in the service of the original intention, its pursuit will not be valid; examples of this include that of seeking knowledge for the sake of others' admiration and praise, in order to dispute with the foolish, to show oneself superior to other scholars, to win others' allegiance, to gain material advantage at others' expense, and the like.²²⁷

When treating the topic of *'azīmah*, that is, namely the original, established intention behind a given action commanded by the Law, and *rukhsah*, or the type of allowance which is granted in connection with certain actions commanded by the Law for the purpose of alleviating hardship, al-Shāṭibī views the *'azīmah* as embodying the Lawgiver's primary intention, while the *rukhsah* embodies a secondary intention.²²⁸ The reason for this is that the *'azīmah* represents the fundamental, universal interest served by the divine legislation, while a *rukhsah* is something which was instituted in situations involving hardship for the purpose of alleviating it, and as such, it serves a particular, contingent interest. Consequently, states al-Shāṭibī, “Hence, the *'azīmah*, that is, the original established objec-

tive of a given action commanded by the Law, applies under normal conditions, while a *rukhsah*, or allowance, will apply when such normal conditions are violated.”²²⁹

As we saw earlier in our presentation of al-Shāṭibī’s theory of objectives, he considers the primary objectives to be equivalent to the five essentials, in relation to which no consideration is given to human beings’ desires and inclinations (in the sense that human beings are obliged to preserve these essentials whether they want to or not). Secondary objectives, by contrast, are those in relation to which human desires and inclinations may be given consideration, and as a result of which they encompass human interests on the level of exigencies and embellishments as well.²³⁰ It is clear that al-Shāṭibī is speaking here of the general objectives of Islamic Law, whereas the examples which have been presented thus far have to do with particular objectives relating to this or that ruling. However, on both levels, the general and the particular, we find both primary, fundamental objectives and secondary, auxiliary objectives, a fact which reflects the coordination and symmetry which mark Imam Abū Ishāq’s perspective on Islamic Law in both its universals and its particulars.

This rule – according to which whatever strengthens, reinforces or supports an intention of the Law is thereby also to be considered one of the Lawmaker’s intentions – is one on which al-Shāṭibī relies with great frequency. However, one is surprised to note that despite the fact that al-Shāṭibī himself has established this rule, he himself undermines it in his discussion of the first of the two sources from which we may derive the objectives of the Lawgiver.²³¹ Specifically, al-Shāṭibī limits the commands and prohibitions on the basis of which we may ascertain the Lawgiver’s intentions to those which are explicit. In so doing, he excludes implicit commands and prohibitions,

such as the prohibition against anything contrary to that which has been enjoined,²³² that is, prohibitions which are implied by commands and commands which are implied by prohibitions. If we acknowledge such implicit commands and prohibitions, they must be

viewed as reflecting not primary intentions, but secondary ones. If, on the other hand, we do not acknowledge them, this points more clearly to an absence of intention. The same may be said with respect to the enjoining of those things without which one's obligations cannot be fulfilled. There is disagreement concerning whether, or to what extent, such implicit commands and prohibitions provide evidence of the Lawgiver's intention; hence, they are not included in the present discussion, and the commands and prohibitions of concern to us have been restricted to those which are explicit in nature.²³³

It is clear that al-Shāṭibī is casting doubt on, if not denying, the affirmation that implicit, or indirect, commands and prohibitions are evidence of an intention on the part of the Lawgiver, and this despite his having stated repeatedly that whatever complements, reinforces or supports a primary objective of the Lawgiver is likewise included among the divine objectives, albeit in a secondary or subordinate sense. For what matters is that they, too, are "intended." This latter position is the valid one; otherwise, how can we conceive of the fulfillment of a legal objective while at the same time doubting the principles that: (1) those things without which explicit obligations cannot be fulfilled are themselves obligatory, and (2) the enjoinment of any action is a prohibition against its opposite? After all, how could the Lawgiver intend something without also intending those things without which His intention cannot be realized? And how could He intend a given outcome or action while, at the same time, permitting its opposite which He forbids and rejects? It nevertheless appears that al-Shāṭibī – the shaykh of objectives – refrains from lending full support to these two principles despite their reasonableness, despite the fact that they serve as aids to the realization of secondary objectives and as protectors of principle objectives, and despite the fact that the majority of *uṣūl* scholars have adopted them.

In his book *Miftāḥ al-Wuṣūl*, his shaykh al-Tilmisānī asks, "Does the enjoinment of something require a means [of fulfilling] what has been enjoined, or does it not? This is the meaning of the question: Are those things without which explicitly stated obligations cannot be fulfilled, themselves obligatory, or are they not? Scholars of *uṣūl*

al-fiqh have differed on this matter, though the majority of them hold that a command necessitates everything upon which the command's fulfillment depends.” Al-Tilmisānī then continues in his discussion of whether the enjoinder of an action is also a prohibition of its opposite, saying, “The majority of jurisprudents and scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* are of the view that the enjoinder of an action is likewise a prohibition of its opposite.”²³⁴ This is confirmed by Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān Bahādīr, a late scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, who makes mention of those who have differed with the majority view on this matter. He states,

The majority of Ḥanafite and Shāfi‘ite *uṣūl* scholars, as well as later thinkers, have adopted the view that if a given action is enjoined, this command is a prohibition against whatever specific action would be the opposite of the action enjoined. This view applies, moreover, whether the opposite is a single action – as in a situation where faith is enjoined, which would be a prohibition against unbelief, or as in the case of the command to move, which would be a prohibition against remaining motionless – or multiple actions, as in a situation where one has been commanded to stand up, in which case the command to stand up would be a prohibition against sitting, reclining, prostrating and the like.

However, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Ḥājib all held that the command to undertake a given action is not a prohibition against its opposite. This, they say, is not logically required. A number of Ḥanafites, Shāfi‘ites and later scholars have held that the command to perform a given action is a prohibition against a single unspecified opposite among a number of possible opposites. Moreover, among those who hold that the command to perform a particular action is a prohibition against its opposite, there are some who generalize this statement, saying that it is a prohibition against the action’s opposite in cases in which the action commanded is either obligatory (*wājib*) or recommended (*mandūb*); according to this view, if the action commanded is obligatory, the implicit prohibition against the action’s opposite is a complete prohibition, whereas if the action commanded is

recommended, the implied prohibition against its opposite is simply the declaration of the action's opposite to be undesirable. Others, by contrast, have restricted the above statement to apply only to commands to perform obligatory actions while excluding actions which are simply recommended. In addition, there are those who hold that just as a command to perform a given action is a prohibition against its opposite, a prohibition against a given action is a command to perform its opposite.²³⁵

The following are examples which illustrate these twin principles, namely, that the command to perform an action is a prohibition against its opposite, and that the prohibition against an action is a command to perform its opposite:

- God Almighty's words, "it is not lawful for them to conceal what God may have created in their wombs, if they believe in God and the Last Day" (Qur'an, 2:228). These words are both a prohibition against concealment and, at the same time, a command to declare the truth openly.
- "O you who have attained to faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet" (49:2), where the prohibition against raising one's voice is, simultaneously, a command to lower it.
- "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze..." (24:30), in which there is both a command to lower one's gaze and a prohibition against looking at women in an unseemly manner.

Similarly in relation to the principle which states that "those things without which explicitly stated obligations cannot be fulfilled are themselves obligations,"²³⁶ it may be said that the command to engage in jihad is a command to make whatever preparations it requires, that the command to seek knowledge is a command to do whatever is necessary in order to engage in its pursuit, that the command to perform the pilgrimage to Makkah is a command to do whatever is needed in order to complete the journey, and so forth. Consequently, al-Maqqarī states in Rule 133, "Anything without which it is

impossible to achieve the required end, is itself required.” And in fact, were it not for the reservations which al-Shāṭibī expresses concerning this principle – out of deference for al-Juwaynī and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī – we could have contented ourselves with al-Shāṭibī’s repeated affirmation of the fact that whatever serves to reinforce or support what is intended, is itself intended.

4. Silence on the Part of the Lawgiver

It is a recognized fact that the Lawgiver may remain silent on certain matters or rulings due to the absence of any occasion or cause for further declarations. As a result, the door is opened to independent reasoning and interpretation and analogical deduction. However, it is not this situation which I wish to discuss here. Rather, what I mean here by “silence” is the Lawgiver’s having refrained from issuing a ruling or laying down legislation in the first place. Al-Shāṭibī states,

Despite the existence of that which would require it and the emergence of a relevant judicial case, no judgement on it is affirmed beyond what already exists. This type of silence is like a statement to the effect that the Lawgiver’s intention is for there to be neither increase nor decrease. In other words, if a situation requiring a practical ruling exists, and if, despite this, no ruling is issued in response, this is tantamount to an explicit statement that the addition of anything to what already exists would be an unacceptable innovation and a violation of what the Lawgiver intends. Hence, we may understand the divine intention to be that we stop at the presently existing limits just as they are.²³⁷

This approach to discerning the objectives of the Lawgiver pertains particularly to the realm of worship, and even more particularly, to the matter of innovation in this realm. By stating this rule, al-Shāṭibī seeks to strike a blow at religious innovations and to hinder their advance into the realm of worship: its forms of expression, its limits, and worship-related practices in emulation of the Prophet’s example. In his book *al-Itiṣām*, al-Shāṭibī relies upon this rule in

arguing against innovations and innovators. In his lengthy response to his shaykh, Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb,²³⁸ al-Shāṭibī reiterates²³⁹ almost verbatim a statement which also appears in *al-Muwāfaqāt*.

At the same time, this approach (to discerning the objectives of the Law) is more restricted in scope than other approaches and is, therefore, the one of least importance. Consequently, we find that Ibn Ashur disregards it entirely even when he is summarizing what al-Shāṭibī has to say about the means of ascertaining the objectives of the Law. Ibn Ashur's summary is sufficiently brief that I have chosen to quote it here. He states,

The Lawgiver's objective may be ascertained in a number of ways. One of these ways is to derive them from primary, explicit commands and prohibitions. A command is a command due to the fact that it requires an action; hence, says al-Shāṭibī, the performance of the action commanded is the Lawgiver's intention or objective. Similarly, a prohibition is a prohibition due to the fact that it requires that an action be refrained from or discontinued. The second way is to consider the bases (*‘ilal*) which underlie commands and prohibitions, such as procreation as the basis for the sanctioning of marriage, and financial benefit as the basis for the sanctioning of buying and selling. As for the third way of determining the Lawgiver's objectives or intentions, it is to recognize that in issuing rulings, the Lawgiver has both primary objectives and secondary objectives; of these, some are stated directly and others indirectly, while still others may be inferred from intentions which receive explicit mention. Whatever is not stated explicitly but may thus be inferred is likewise intended by the Lawgiver. And this is the sum of what he has to say on this matter.²⁴⁰

It has been suggested by Abd al-Majid al-Najjar²⁴¹ that the reason for Ibn Ashur's failure to mention al-Shāṭibī's fourth way of ascertaining the Lawmaker's objectives is that he took no notice of it due to its placement near the end of al-Shāṭibī's discussion of this topic. This is unlikely, however, especially given that Ibn Ashur was himself in the process of writing on the subject of the objectives of the Law and, indeed, on the same issue, namely, 'means of ascer-

taining [the Lawgiver's objectives].’ Hence, it would not be reasonable to conclude that Ibn Ashur did not finish reading al-Shāṭibī’s ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ and its conclusion. Rather, what is more likely to have happened is that he omitted it deliberately, not deeming it of sufficient importance to discuss.

5. Induction

Given its significance, this method should, by all rights, have been placed first in al-Shāṭibī’s list of ways to ascertain the objectives of the Lawgiver. Strangely, however, al-Shāṭibī makes no mention of it whatsoever with the four methods to which he devotes the conclusion of his *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*. Hence, he gives it neither first place, nor even fifth!

Ever since my first reading of al-Shāṭibī’s conclusion, I have been at a loss to explain his failure to mention induction as one of the avenues leading to knowledge of the objectives of the Law. What makes this omission even more difficult to understand is that whatever one reads of al-Shāṭibī’s writings, one finds it to be replete with references to the practice of induction – whether by way of adducing support for a position or drawing attention to its value and importance.

Throughout the four parts of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, I have found on the order of one hundred such references. This being the case, then, how could al-Shāṭibī have neglected to identify induction as an independent means of determining the Lawgiver’s intention? Did he omit mention of it here because he considered his numerous references to it elsewhere to be sufficient? Or did he simply overlook it in the process of editing the final section of his *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*? Or, alternatively, might it be due to his view on the subject at hand? I, personally, have yet to arrive at a satisfactory answer to such questions.

Be that as it may, it can nevertheless be stated with certainty that induction is, for al-Shāṭibī, one of the most crucial, powerful tools with which to identify the objectives of the Law. The truth of this affirmation will become apparent from what follows.

The Importance of Induction in al-Shāṭibī's View

In the first of the thirteen premises with which al-Shāṭibī introduces *al-Muwāfaqāt*, he declares that the fundamentals of jurisprudence (that is, the foundations and universals upon which it rests) must be characterized by definitive certainty which admits of no doubt. Evidence for this, he says, may be found in an “inductive reading which yields complete certainty,”²⁴² since the universals of Islamic Law are not based on a single piece of evidence, but upon many such pieces which, when taken together, convey a single message which is thereby invested with complete certitude. Moreover, he states, “The fact that some particulars do not conform to the dictates of this or that universal does not mean that the universal in question is not truly universal. Rather, that which is predominant and accounts for the great majority of cases is viewed, in the context of the Law, as universal and definitive.”²⁴³ Hence, al-Shāṭibī demonstrates special concern to marshal inductive evidence for what he says. Indeed, he views this as one of the most salient features of his book, saying, “The types of proof given consideration here have been gathered from a constellation of speculative evidence which is concatenated in such a way that it yields a single, definitive meaning.”²⁴⁴ In pointing out this feature of his writing, al-Shāṭibī makes reference to “the source and manner of treating evidence in this book.”²⁴⁵ Toward the end of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī reminds his readers once again of this same feature, and this time in more explicit terms, saying,

...we have also explained the manner in which certainty is derived from that which is speculative,²⁴⁶ and which – thanks be God – is the distinguishing mark of this book for those who give it careful thought.²⁴⁷

Among those who have, indeed, given careful thought to *al-Muwāfaqāt* and confirmed this unique characteristic of the book is ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz. In his painstaking, comprehensive study of this work by al-Shāṭibī, Darrāz speaks highly²⁴⁸ of al-Shāṭibī’s way of

investigating speculative evidence on the level of its signification, its

text or both, as well as its rational aspects. In so doing, he joins strength to strength, continuing with the inductive process until he arrives at what may be considered definitive certainty on the subject at hand. This is a unique feature of this book in its reasoning and argumentation. It is, moreover, a successful method by means of which he achieves what he has set out to do in all but the rarest instances, may God have abundant mercy upon him.²⁴⁹

Given this brief overview of the meaning of induction as applied and understood by al-Shāṭibī, its importance to him, and the degree to which he depended upon it, let us now return to our topic of main concern, namely, the use of induction to identify and confirm the objectives of the Law.

Induction and the Objectives of the Law

From the opening pages of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī draws a link between induction and the discovery of the objectives of the Law. In the course of relating the story of how he came to write *al-Muwāfaqāt*, he states,

When the secret which had been so well concealed manifested itself, and when God in His bounty granted me access and guidance to that which He willed to reveal thereof, I proceeded to record its wonders and gather together its scattered pieces from the most specific to the most general, citing the evidence thereof from the sources of Islamic rulings with attention to every detail. In so doing, I relied upon all-inclusive inferences rather than limiting myself to isolated particulars, demonstrating the textual and rational foundations [of Islamic rulings] to the extent that I was enabled by grace to elucidate the objectives of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.²⁵⁰

As we have seen, all of the objectives of the Qur'an and the Sunnah rest on the notion of tracing the Law and its rulings to the bases which gave rise to them – that is, on the notion of *ta'līl*, while the process of *ta'līl* is based on the conviction that Islamic Law may

be explained in terms of its preservation of human interests. Hence, the first step with which al-Shāṭibī commences his search for evidence in support of these two affirmations is an inductive reading of the Qur'an and the Sunnah on the basis of which he declares, "What we have induced from the Law is that it was established to preserve human interests."²⁵¹ Even the passages which al-Shāṭibī cites in support of the existence of *ta'�il* in the details of the Law, he cites as inductive evidence which, when taken together, yields definitive knowledge. Hence, the evidence which al-Shāṭibī adduces is, from beginning to end, based on an inductive process.

Perhaps the most important theme to which al-Shāṭibī applies induction and in relation to which he demonstrates that induction is the most critical means of confirming the objectives of the Law is "the Lawgiver's intention to preserve [human interests as represented by] the threefold division consisting of essentials, exigencies and embellishments."²⁵² After all, the assertion that the Lawgiver's intention is to preserve these primary universals cannot be proven by citing a single text, nor even several texts which state this intention explicitly. For this premise is too important and too critical to be demonstrated by evidence which might be called into question, whether in relation to texts' reliability, their meaning, or the absence of conflicting evidence. Rather, it must be demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt; hence, it must be supported by irrefutable evidence, since it is the fundamental of fundamentals with respect to Islamic Law.²⁵³

So, then: What is the definitive means of achieving this end? Al-Shāṭibī states,

The evidence for this [affirmation] is established in another way which goes to the heart of the matter. These three foundations²⁵⁴ firm grounding in the Law is questioned by no legal scholar qualified to engage in independent reasoning; nor would such a scholar question the affirmation that the Lawgiver intends for these foundations to be recognized and given consideration. Proof of this may be found through an inductive reading of the Law which involves an examination of those texts which are both universal and particular in import.

Such an inductive reading, since it looks to the overall, inner spirit of the Law rather than just its outward details or particulars, cannot be carried out on the basis of a single text or piece of evidence; rather, it requires the marshalling of numerous texts which embody a variety of objectives and which, when added one to another, yield a single conclusion upon which they all agree. It is through this same type of process that the general populace has come to be certain of Ḥātim's generosity, ‘Ali's courage and other aspects of our Islamic heritage. In demonstrating the Lawgiver's intention with respect to these foundations, people have not relied upon one specific instance of proof, nor on a particular aspect of the question at hand; rather, clarity has emerged for them from a constellation of proofs – including the straightforward, apparent meaning of texts, texts with general meanings and applications, those which are restricted to specific situations and individuals and those which apply universally, and particular details pertaining to a variety of entities, actions and events in every conceivable area and type of jurisprudence — with the result that they found all parts and aspects of the Law to revolve around the preservation of these [three] foundations. This result, moreover, is supported by what is added to it by way of factual and circumstantial evidence, both written and unwritten.²⁵⁵

By means of this inductive approach, al-Shāṭibī demonstrates (the Lawgiver's intention) to preserve the five essentials,²⁵⁶ namely, religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth. In his discussion of commands and prohibitions in *Kitāb al-Aḥkām* he notes that depending on the results yielded by an inductive reading, commands and prohibitions may either be taken at face value or viewed in terms of what they convey of the Lawgiver's intention.²⁵⁷ Moreover, as we have seen, it is through an inductive reading of the Law that it becomes apparent that whatever serves to reinforce and support what is known to be an intention of the Lawgiver is, itself, a divine intention, if only secondarily.²⁵⁸

In the context of his war on religious innovations and his rebuttal of their defenders' premises in his book, *al-Itiṣām*, al-Shāṭibī states that unrestricted interests have nothing to do with the Islamic forms of worship and that worship-related legal rulings are to be accepted

without question, since they are based solely upon divine judgment and prerogative. In proof of this claim, al-Shāṭibī resorts to an inductive reading of a number of worship-related legal rulings which cannot be subjected to rational scrutiny and interest-based *ta‘līl*. He then continues, saying,

This inductive reading yields a message concerning the objectives of the Law ... namely, that the Lawgiver's intention with respect to legal obligations of this sort is simply that human beings be held accountable for adhering to them and that they refrain from independent reasoning and interpretation, committing themselves instead to the One who established them and surrendering to Him therein.²⁵⁹

Then he adds, “It may thus be known concerning the Lawgiver's intention that He has left nothing in the realm of worship to human discretion. On the contrary, there is nothing for human beings to do but to respect the limits He has set.”²⁶⁰

What has been presented thus far should, I think, be sufficient to make clear the degree to which al-Shāṭibī relies upon induction in general, and in determining the higher objectives of the Law in particular. Similarly, it helps to support the definitive statement made earlier that for al-Shāṭibī, induction is the most critical means of ascertaining the objectives of the Law despite the fact that he makes no direct mention of it in the conclusion which he devotes to this topic.

Moreover, if this is the place occupied by induction in al-Shāṭibī's scheme of thought, it remains for us to show how induction compares with the other methods by which the Lawgiver's objectives may be determined. It bears noting in this regard that those objectives which are discernible through the inductive process are the major, universal objectives of Islamic Law, and around which most of al-Shāṭibī's discussions revolve. Consequently, we find that induction plays a role in virtually all of the conclusions which al-Shāṭibī reaches concerning the universals of the Law or its overall objectives.

It may likewise be observed that those objectives which are determined inductively are characterized by definitive certainty. As we

have seen, al-Shāṭibī stresses the definitive nature of induction, whether it is ‘complete’ or ‘incomplete’ (that is, whether it is based on all cases, or on the majority of cases). In doing so, al-Shāṭibī disregards the position taken by numerous *uṣūl* scholars and logicians who – influenced by Aristotelian logic – hold that incomplete induction yields reasonable certainty, but not definitive knowledge.²⁶¹

As for those objectives of the Law which are determined by means of the other methods described by al-Shāṭibī, they tend to be specific objectives having to do with this or that ruling, and this or that text. In addition, many of these objectives are determined with only a reasonable degree of certainty or probability rather than being considered definitive, as is the case with objectives which are derived from the apparent sense of commands and prohibitions or from bases or occasions (*‘ilal*) which have been identified through speculative methods, such as the ‘appropriateness approach’ (*maslak al-munāsabah*), for example.

Despite the fact that al-Shāṭibī makes direct mention of the four methods by which the Lawgiver’s intentions may be determined, he nevertheless relies more on induction than on any of these stated methods. As a consequence, the objectives which he identifies are characterized for the most part by full certainty. Rarely does he deal with specific objectives having to do with particular legal rulings and obligations, and when he does do so, he does so only incidentally.

Hence, one is at a loss to account for the unqualified judgments made by Abd al-Majid al-Najjar in the article referred to earlier,²⁶² where he states that in expounding the objectives of the Law, al-Shāṭibī “adopts an atomistic, reductionistic approach...,” on the basis of which he seeks to explain the fact that al-Shāṭibī limits himself to the use of methods appropriate to such an approach. He states,

When he comes to explain the methods of identifying objectives...they reveal themselves to be consistent with the approach he has employed throughout most of his study, which is predominantly atomistic insofar as it tends in the direction of searching for such objectives within the realm of isolated rulings rather than in the realm of universal, inclusive objectives, a phenomenon which manifests itself clearly in the final three methods [specified by al-Shāṭibī].

Al-Najjar appears to have based his article in general, and the judgments made in this paragraph in particular, on nothing but al-Shāṭibī's conclusion to 'The Book of Higher Objectives,' since it is to this conclusion that his judgments apply to a certain extent. However, as I have sought to make clear in the last few pages, the objectives which al-Shāṭibī elucidates are, for the most part, the universal, overall objectives for which he finds support by means of the inductive method, whereas specific, particular objectives are only discussed incidentally. I can only assume that al-Najjar has, at the very least, read al-Shāṭibī's *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid*. However, the effects of such reading are not apparent in this article, in which he focuses so completely on the conclusion to *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid* that he fails to note the most significant methods for determining objectives. In fact, al-Najjar fails to observe even the type of objectives with which al-Shāṭibī's book is filled despite the fact that an overview of al-Shāṭibī's subheadings alone²⁶³ is sufficient to make clear that he is not concerned with particularistic objectives but, rather, with overall objectives and universals. The error in al-Najjar's judgments arises from his disregard for al-Shāṭibī's reliance upon induction, which he employs constantly throughout *al-Muwāfaqāt*. Unfortunately, al-Najjar allows this very error to become the basis for his comparisons between al-Shāṭibī's methods of identifying objectives and those of Ibn Ashur.

Overall Evaluation of al-Shāṭibī’s Theory

[I]

Al-Shāṭibī’s Theory Between Imitation and Originality

The originality for which al-Shāṭibī is responsible in the fundamentals of jurisprudence in general, and in the study of the objectives of the Law in particular, is beyond dispute; indeed, all those familiar with his writings hail his unique contributions to the field. However, at the same time, no one would go so far as to claim that al-Shāṭibī created his theory *ex nihilo*, that is, that he brought it into existence without antecedents; after all, this would not be in the nature of things. On the contrary he must have benefited from those who went before him and built upon their discoveries and conclusions. Indeed, al-Shāṭibī exhibited both conformity and creativity, he imitated and innovated, he took and gave; and this is all that could be asked of anyone, even the most gifted and knowledgeable. As for the degree to which he may have surpassed others, this can only be gauged by the extent and value of the originality he introduced.

Traditional Elements of al-Shāṭibī’s Theory

Let us begin with those aspects of al-Shāṭibī’s theory which reflect

conformity and imitation, since it is these which constitute its foundation and point of departure. Indeed, al-Shāṭibī himself took pride in the fact that the creativity and originality which had been made possible for him reflect truths which have been “confirmed by the verses of the Qur’ān and the accounts passed down through the Prophetic Sunnah, whose strongholds have been guarded by our most virtuous ancestors, whose contours have been shaped by the most learned of scholars, and whose foundations have been laid by the insights of the most discerning.”¹

Foremost among these individuals were the Companions of the Prophet, “who knew the objectives of the Law and carried them out, who lay the Law’s foundations and established its fundamentals, pondering the words of the Qur’ān and doing their utmost to live out its principles and accomplish its objectives. In so doing, they became the elite of the elite, the prime of the prime, and stars by whose light people with discerning hearts would be guided.”² Thus, al-Shāṭibī acknowledges what has already been affirmed by the verses of the Qur’ān and the prophetic hadiths, guided (in his mission) by the example set by the Prophet’s most admirable Companions, filling out the details of the features which had first been sketched out by leading thinkers, and building upon foundations which had been laid by farsighted scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

I prefaced this study of al-Shāṭibī’s theory with an overview of the notion of objectives as it was understood among *uṣūl* scholars who had preceded him,³ and as it is understood by the Malikite school.⁴ A review of these two sections and a comparison of their contents with the sections which follow them brings to light a number of similarities and commonalities between al-Shāṭibī and his predecessors. It thus reveals the many ways in which al-Shāṭibī was influenced by and benefited from those who went before him. In what follows I will present a brief overview of these influences.

Al-Shāṭibī’s Debt to the *Uṣūliyyūn*

We have seen how *uṣūliyyūn* from the time of al-Juwainī and al-Ghazālī began to classify human interests into the three categories of

'essentials,' 'exigencies' and 'embellishments,' in addition to limiting the category of essentials to five, namely, religion, human life, the human faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth. These classifications are adopted by al-Shāṭibī without modification; nor does he make any objection to the proposal by certain *uṣūliyyūn* that a sixth 'essential,' namely, that of honor,⁵ be added as well. Al-Shāṭibī states repeatedly throughout his writings that these essentials have been preserved in all divinely revealed religions and laws, a thought which was originally expressed by al-Ghazālī and which was adopted by the majority of *uṣūliyyūn* thereafter.

It will be noted that the examples which al-Shāṭibī cites in illustration of the three categories of 'essentials,' 'exigencies' and 'embellishments' and the preservation of the five essentials are, for the most part, the same ones cited by his predecessors, and particularly al-Ghazālī. Of all the *uṣūliyyūn* who preceded al-Shāṭibī, al-Ghazālī is the one he mentions with the greatest frequency. Al-Rāzī comes in a distant second,⁶ followed by al-Juwainī, al-Qarāfī, and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām.

As for al-Juwainī, who is the earliest of these thinkers, we have noted the pioneering role he performed in laying the groundwork for the formulation of the theory of objectives. Al-Shāṭibī, together with others, is indebted to al-Juwainī for this contribution, both directly and indirectly. Moreover, in addition to the overall manner in which he benefited from al-Juwainī's ideas relating to the objectives of the Law, we find that specific issues with which al-Shāṭibī deals can be traced back to al-Juwainī's writings. One example of such an issue is the affirmation that the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) are definitive rather than speculative in nature. It is this premise with which al-Shāṭibī opens *al-Muwāfaqāt*, and it is likewise found in the opening pages of al-Juwainī's *al-Burhān*. Another example of specific issues which manifest al-Shāṭibī's debt to al-Juwainī is the notion that legal rulings vary according to whether they are being viewed on the communal level or the individual level. As we saw earlier, a particular action may be permissible on the individual level, but obligatory or recommended on the communal level.⁷ Based on this perspective, al-Shāṭibī affirms in his *Kitāb al-*

Maqāṣid that, taken as a whole, either the exigencies or the embellishments might be viewed as equivalent to one of the essentials.⁸

Al-Juwainī expresses a similar point of view when he states, for example, that selling may be viewed as an essential on the communal level since, “if people did not exchange with one another what is in their possession, this would lead to an obvious need. The practice of buying and selling, then, rests upon the necessity which results from [the nature of this] type [of transaction] and the existence of the community.”⁹ In other words, on the individual level, selling is classified among the exigencies, whereas on the collective or communal level, it is classified as an essential. This notion is polished, clarified, developed and expanded by al-Shāṭibī; hence, whereas in al-Juwainī’s writings it is a mere seed, in al-Shāṭibī’s writings it becomes a full-grown plant.

Al-Juwainī makes an insightful observation concerning the complementary relationship between the obligations imposed by the Law and natural human propensities in the achievement of benefit and the prevention of harm. Specifically, he says, we find that those things which human beings crave instinctively and feel compelled to seek – such as food and drink, material possessions, sexual union, and prestigious positions – are rarely encouraged or enjoined by the Law. On the contrary, we find that the Law places restrictions on such things in order to prevent instinctive impulsiveness from leading us into excess. With regard to those things to which human beings have a natural aversion, we find that the Law allows people to avoid them in keeping with their natural inclinations.¹⁰ However, it affirms and stresses its requirement of things which people find burdensome and tend to neglect, such as worship, giving others their due, and jihad. Here again, what is merely a passing thought for al-Juwainī¹¹ is developed by al-Shāṭibī who, as is his custom, draws illustrative examples thereof from the various areas of Islamic Law, then sets them forth in the form of clear, precise rules.¹²

As for al-Shāṭibī’s debt to al-Ghazālī, it is transparent and explicit. Indeed, al-Ghazālī’s influence on al-Shāṭibī is attested to by so many citations in both *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-Itiṣām* that al-Ghazālī may well be considered one of al-Shāṭibī’s foremost shaykhs despite

the span of three centuries which separates the two men's earthly lives. And even without such attestation, it would be sufficient to note that the most significant principles, examples and terms reiterated by *uṣūliyyūn* in relation to the objectives of the Law find their origin in al-Ghazālī; these, then, became the raw material which al-Shāṭibī adopted and built upon. And not only this – despite its relevance to our topic – but on the nearly forty occasions when al-Shāṭibī mentions al-Ghazālī in various parts of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, he does so in a tone of support and agreement. Hence, al-Shāṭibī relies upon al-Ghazālī and cites his views as support for his own, whereas his mention of other *uṣūliyyūn* – and most particularly, al-Rāzī – is frequently accompanied by words of criticism and objection.

It is thus no surprise to find that al-Shāṭibī commends certain of al-Ghazālī's writings and views in a way in which he praises no other scholar (with the exception of Imam Mālik, of course). The following examples indicate the extent of al-Shāṭibī's reliance on al-Ghazālī:

- In his discussions of causes and outcomes, al-Shāṭibī speaks of human beings' obligation, when dealing with worldly causes, to ponder a given action's results and ultimate consequences. In this context he tells us that "al-Ghazālī approved this principle in his book *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and sufficient other works [that we are justified in advocating this position]."¹³
- When discussing the terms 'valid' and 'invalid' and their meaning to scholars of jurisprudence, al-Shāṭibī touches upon these terms' otherworldly dimension, which has to do with whether or not a given action is acceptable to God and merits reward from Him. Then he states, "Although this use of terminology might be considered strange by scholars of jurisprudence, it is nevertheless mentioned by scholars who concern themselves with moral purification (*al-takhalluq*),¹⁴ such as al-Ghazālī and others. This dimension was likewise recognized by our earliest Muslim forebears. Consider what al-Ghazālī has to say concerning this in his *al-Niyyah wa al-Ikhlas* (Book of Intention and Sincerity)."¹⁵

- In the context of his castigation of those who interpolate irrelevant sciences into the interpretation of the Qur'an, claiming that this helps toward an understanding of its objectives, al-Shāṭibī refers to the position taken by Ibn Rushd the grandson, according to whom the philosophical disciplines are indispensable for a true understanding of the Law and its objectives. After criticizing Ibn Rushd the grandson with unaccustomed ferocity, al-Shāṭibī writes, "No one can instruct you in such matters as well as one who, like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, is thoroughly versed therein, and who has dealt with them clearly and exhaustively in various parts of his books."¹⁶
- Like a number of other scholars, al-Shāṭibī holds that if corruption were to run so rampant on earth that it became impossible for people to earn a living or get enough to eat by legitimate means, then it would be permissible for people to earn what they needed to survive in whatever ways were available; it would thus be permissible for them to increase their means to the extent required for them to live, but not to the point of opulence and ease. He then continues, saying, "In his book, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī presents a thorough discussion of this issue; he also makes mention of it in his *uṣūl*-related works such as *al-Mankhūl* and *Shifā' al-Ghalil*."¹⁷

Such references – which represent only a tiny sample of what one will find in al-Shāṭibī's books – indicate both the high esteem in which he held al-Ghazālī and his thorough acquaintance with al-Ghazālī's writings. As was indicated in my discussion of sources of benefit and harm, al-Shāṭibī was also influenced in a visible way by 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām and his disciple, al-Qarāfī, particularly in relation to sources of benefit and harm and questions pertaining to hardship. We find, for example, that both Ibn 'Abd al-Salām and al-Qarāfī¹⁸ divide hardships into two categories:

(1) Hardships which are inseparable from the fulfillment of a given religious obligation, such as the hardship involved in performing regular and total ritual ablutions in cold weather, rising early to perform the dawn prayer, the rigors entailed by fasting and performing

the pilgrimage to Makkah, etc. Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām states, “None of these hardships would exempt an individual from the performance of acts of worship or obedience; nor are they meant to be alleviated.”¹⁹

(2) Hardships which may or may not accompany the fulfillment of a religious obligation. This second category is further divided into three subcategories: (a) severe hardships, (b) mild hardships, and (c) moderate hardships. The first of these types is taken into account by the Lawgiver, who calls for them to be alleviated accordingly. The second type is given no consideration, while the third type is subject to inquiry and independent judgment on the basis of which it may be decided whether it belongs to the first or second of these three subcategories. Al-Shāṭibī adopts this same division, though in his own way,²⁰ that is, by means of his accustomed additions and revisions, as well as his incorporation of it into his theory of objectives.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām touches upon the subject of human beings’ inborn qualities, his view being that such qualities merit neither reward nor punishment. He states, “Inborn qualities – such as pleasant appearance, medium height and build, good morals, courage and generosity – are not acquired by human effort. Hence, they merit no reward despite their excellence and desirability.”²¹

The same applies, moreover, to objectionable qualities, such as lack of intelligence, ill-temperedness, cowardice, stinginess, harshness, rudeness, a propensity for vice and a tendency to find virtue burdensome; hence, in and of themselves, they merit no punishment. Al-Shāṭibī also deals with this issue; however, he expands and deepens the discussion of it, identifying with the utmost precision which of the aforementioned characteristics merits praise and reward, and which of them merits condemnation and punishment. In other words, he identifies which obligations relevant to these characteristics are intended by the Lawgiver, and which are not.²²

Al-Shāṭibī's Debt to the Malikite School

It should also be noted that what enabled al-Shāṭibī to benefit fully from earlier scholars’ illuminations and inspirations concerning the

objectives and wise purposes of the Law, then to develop and build upon these inspirations until he had given us a fully integrated theory with extensions into all the varied domains of Islamic Law, was his thorough grounding in Malikite principles and fundamentals. For a proper appreciation of the extent to which al-Shāṭibī's theory is indebted to his Malikite upbringing, one would do well to review my earlier discussion of the link between the Malikite school and the objectives of the Law.²³

The Malikite school, as we have seen, is the school of human interest and *istiṣlāḥ*, of interest-based *istihsān* and interest-based interpretation of Islamic texts. It is the school which insists most uncompromisingly on warding off potential sources of harm, prohibiting anything which has the potential of leading to such harm, and uprooting harm's causes. It is the Malikite school which focuses attention on human objectives and intentions and refuses to stop at mere appearances and words. Moreover, it is – of all the schools of Islamic jurisprudence – the one which most consistently seeks to identify the bases of legal rulings having to do with daily customs and transactions; in other words, it is the school which devotes itself most fully to revealing the objectives of the Lawgiver and building upon them. And it is these Malikite principles, all of which are reflected in the theory of objectives, which helped to develop and nurture the objectives-based mindset which al-Shāṭibī manifests so clearly.

Now, having noted the sources from which al-Shāṭibī drew and the various ways in which he was influenced by and conformed to earlier thinkers in his theory, I would like to touch upon some of what has been said and rumored concerning the roots of al-Shāṭibī's theory and the ways in which he derived it therefrom. We have, for example, the claim put forward first by Abd al-Majid Turki, then by Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, according to which al-Shāṭibī, in what he had to say on the subject of the objectives of the Law, was completing what had been said earlier by Ibn Rushd and following in his footsteps. In the context of a seminar held at the College of Arts in Rabat on the occasion of eight centuries having passed since Ibn Rushd's death, Turki stated,

It behooves us to draw attention to his [Ibn Rushd's] enrichment of juristic thought in such a way that – as we see it – he laid the groundwork for later developments and, indeed, for the birth of a new academic discipline which was to emerge two centuries after his death. The thinker responsible for this newly founded discipline's emergence, namely, al-Shāṭibī of Andalusia, chose to refer to it as 'the science of the objectives of the Law' [*ilm maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*].²⁴

To begin with, I do not know what Turki means by saying that al-Shāṭibī "chose to refer to it [i.e., to the newly founded discipline] as 'the science of the objectives of the Law.'" The appellation "objectives of the Law" had long been in use when al-Shāṭibī appeared on the scene, evidence for which I have provided in sufficiency. And as for the term "the science of the objectives of the Law," al-Shāṭibī never used it at all. Rather, the first person to use this term – and this quite recently – was Ibn Ashur, as will be seen in the conclusion to this book.

The evidence which Turki adduces for his claim that Ibn Rushd laid the groundwork for al-Shāṭibī's establishment of the objectives of the Law (as a new discipline) is that Ibn Rushd worked to "rationalize" Islamic jurisprudence and raise it to the level of "objectivity" (!?). Concerning this point he says,

... this effort to create an integrated system founded upon reason, and this concern to seek objectivity and certainty, were to prepare the way – as we see it – for the emergence of a new academic discipline at the hands of al-Shāṭibī...[And it is this which leads me to] grant Ibn Rushd a place in the discovery of a new science, that is, the science of the objectives of the Law.

Unfortunately, the 'evidence' which Turki offers us in support of granting Ibn Rushd a place in the discovery of "the science of the higher objectives of the Law" is nothing but a set of vague claims. What, for example, is the "integrated system" which Ibn Rushd put forward, or attempted to put forward? What is the meaning of these new terms, which are foreigners to the field being spoken of? What

is meant, exactly, by saying that the construction of this juristic system was “founded upon reason”? Is Ibn Rushd being singled out among jurisprudents for credit in this regard? Is “the concern to seek objectivity and certainty” likewise peculiar to Ibn Rushd? Lastly, if we grant the replies given to such questions – though nothing relating thereto can be taken for granted – does it follow necessarily that Ibn Rushd discovered the science of the objectives of the Law? And is this supposed necessity born out by the facts?

In support of his claim, Turki cites one other argument which bears some connection to the subject of objectives, but which can only be viewed as a basis for his claim by virtue of forcing the evidence to fit the desired conclusion. He states,

Allow us to note that in his book, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, Ibn Rushd employs the term *maṣlahī*, or ‘interest-based,’ which he counterpoises with the term *‘ibādī*, or ‘that which calls for unquestioning submission.’ [Ibn Rushd states,]²⁵ “It is not impossible for interests which are comprehensible to human reason to serve as the bases for obligatory acts of worship. In such cases the Law has allowed for two different objectives:²⁶ one of them *maṣlahī*, and the other *‘ibādī*. By *maṣlahī*, I am referring to objectives having to do with tangible realities, and by *‘ibādī*, I am referring to objectives having to do with the purification of one’s soul.”

If the only place in which Turki has discovered the term *maṣlahī* and its use in the interpretation of legal rulings is Ibn Rushd’s *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, then perhaps in the end,²⁷ he will discover that the use of such terminology is well-established in books on Islamic jurisprudence, particularly those by Malikite scholars, and was widespread among scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, both before and after Ibn Rushd’s time. We have cited sufficient examples of this phenomenon that there is no need to reiterate or add to them at this point.

However, what never ceases to amaze me is the way in which some researchers arrive at judgments, form theories, and interpret phenomena and developments based on nothing but (a few terms) which they pick out, then repeat, placing them in boldface type and

underlining them, then insisting that their listeners or readers believe in the conclusions they have based on these words, despite the fact that such conclusions would not be supported even by scores of similar terms! If it were academically justifiable for us to claim that Ibn Rushd pioneered and influenced al-Shāṭibī in the area of the objectives of the Law based on the mere fact that he used the term *maṣlahī* it would make more sense for us to base the same claim on his use of terms such as *maqṣid al-sharī'* or *maqṣūd al-sharī'* (the intent of the Law), both of which are terms which are used by virtually every scholar of jurisprudence and its fundamentals who has ever written. (See Chapter One.) Ibn Rushd makes repeated use of the term *maqṣūd al-shārī'*, that is, the objective of the Lawgiver, and other similar phrases; however, he employs them only in passing, and in contexts which are unrelated to our topic, namely, the objectives of the Law.

Specifically, Ibn Rushd's use of terms such as *maqṣūd al-shārī'* and the like occurs in his discussion of issues relating to doctrine. Thus, in the context of his denial and criticism of invalid interpretations which had been introduced into Islamic doctrine by certain groups of scholastic theologians, he states, "If careful thought is given to all of them [i.e., these interpretations], as well as to the objective of the Law (*maqṣid al-sharī'*), it will become apparent that most of them are recently introduced teachings and heretical interpretations. [In investigating such teachings,] I bring to mind those doctrines which are required by the Law, that is, those without which the Law cannot be fulfilled, and in this way I inquire into the objective of the Lawgiver (*maqṣid al-shārī'*)."²⁸

When discussing the teachings of scholastic theologians on the divine attributes, Ibn Rushd divides them into three schools: (1) Those who hold that the divine attributes are identical with the divine essence, and that there is no multiplicity and (2) those who hold that there is multiplicity. Ibn Rushd further divides this second group into two subgroups, namely: (a) those who see this multiplicity as self-subsistent and (b) those who see it as subsisting in other than itself. Then he adds, "Yet all of this is far from the objective of the Law. Hence, what the general populace needs to know concerning these attributes is simply what the Law declares concerning them,

namely, that they exist, without detailing the matter any further.”²⁹ Similarly with respect to knowledge, Ibn Rushd declares that “the aim of knowledge as it pertains to the general populace is simply action, and whatever is more beneficial in action is more worthy of being known. As for the aim of knowledge with respect to scholars, it is both knowledge and action.”³⁰ On page 49 of his book, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd states, “You should know that the objective of the Law is simply to teach true knowledge and correct action.”

It is on texts such as these – or, more precisely, on phrases such as these – that al-Jabiri depends when he states, “al-Shāṭibī took this idea from Ibn Rushd, who had employed it in the area of doctrine, then transferred it to the realm of *uṣūl*, that is, the fundamentals of jurisprudence”!³¹ Thus it is that a prominent researcher and well-known thinker can, with utter confidence and ease – that is to say, without reservations, the proposal of alternative interpretations, proofs, or a search for supporting evidence – make the definitive declaration that al-Shāṭibī took the notion of objectives from Ibn Rushd!

Al-Jabiri declares that those who read al-Shāṭibī

will not be able to understand his purposes or perceive the various innovative aspects of his thought unless they meet two conditions. The first condition is that they be well-read, not only in the field of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, but, in addition, in the various branches of Arab culture and civilization, including Qur’anic interpretation, hadith, jurisprudence and its fundamentals, scholastic theology, logic, philosophy and Sufism...³²

If al-Jabiri held himself to the same requirements he imposes on others who read al-Shāṭibī, and particularly, the requirement that one be well-read in the areas of jurisprudence and its fundamentals – which constitute the most natural, fertile soil for a theory such as al-Shāṭibī’s – he would not be so enthralled by certain terms used by Ibn Rushd in the realm of Islamic doctrine that he makes them into a key to the interpretation of what al-Shāṭibī has to say about the objectives of the Law. Nor would he, in his unbounded enthusiasm,

consider al-Shāṭibī's discourse on the objectives of the Law to be "entirely new."³³

What bears noting at this juncture, however, is that al-Shāṭibī hardly mentions Ibn Rushd the grandson. Rather, the Ibn Rushd to whom he makes repeated reference, from whom he quotes and upon whom he relies, is Ibn Rushd the grandfather; indeed, it is Ibn Rushd the grandfather to whom both al-Shāṭibī and others are referring when (particularly in the area of jurisprudence) they use the name 'Ibn Rushd' without further qualification. Hence, in view of the fact that al-Shāṭibī did, in fact, rely upon and cite the writings of Ibn Rushd the grandfather on numerous occasions, it would be of far greater benefit and more in keeping with the nature of things if those who apply themselves to searching for the roots of al-Shāṭibī's theory were to direct their attention instead toward Ibn Rushd the grandfather and the huge legacy he has left us in the realm of Islamic jurisprudence. After all, Ibn Rushd the grandfather was Andalusia's leading scholar of jurisprudence and that age's authority in the minute details, mysteries and sublets of the Malikite school. Indeed, what he offered to Malikite jurisprudence in his book entitled, *al-Bayān wa al-Tahṣīl*³⁴ placed all those who came after him in his debt.

As for Ibn Rushd the grandson, he does not appear to have exerted any influence on al-Shāṭibī's writings, and perhaps the only occasion when al-Shāṭibī mentions him is in the context of his discussion of the various disciplines which had been added to (the study of) the Qur'an. Hence, in the course of a digression in which he criticizes those who introduce into Qur'anic interpretation sciences which they claim to be necessary for an understanding of the word of God, he states,

In his book entitled, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayn al-Shari‘ah wa al-Hikmah min al-Ittiṣāl*, the wise Ibn Rushd claims that philosophy is required for a correct understanding of the meaning of Islamic Law. However, if someone were to put forward an opposing claim, he would not be far from the mark. A middle ground between these two opposing positions may be sought in what the righteous ancestors had to say con-

cerning such sciences. Did they make use of them, or did they disregard and remain ignorant of them? Whatever the case may be, they are known to have had a solid understanding of the Qur'an, testimony to which is born by both the Prophet and many others; hence [the hadith], "let a person look to see where he is placing his foot..."³⁵

Lastly, let no one think that I am seeking to detract from the place occupied by Ibn Rushd the grandson or to discredit his scholarship and thought. On the contrary, I hold him in the highest esteem; in fact, I consider myself to be among his greatest admirers. However, I want to place things in their proper perspective, especially given the fact that the matter has to do with research methodology, means of adducing proof, and the manner in which the researcher arrives at judgments on things.

Another claim put forward in this connection is that made by Sad Muhammad al-Shannawi, according to whom al-Shāṭibī was influenced by such thinkers as Ibn Taymiyah and Ibn al-Qayyim. Indeed, al-Shannawi states,

Imam al-Shāṭibī was influenced by the writings of his forebears, including al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Qarāfi. Consequently, we find his book to be a combination and analysis of these valuable points of view, essential elements of which include the theory of unrestricted interests and the practice of basing legal rulings of all kinds on them, as well as the distinctiveness of Islamic legislation in this respect.³⁶

Most unfortunately, however, this statement does not contain a single affirmation whose validity can be taken for granted.

1. Its author has not adduced a single piece of evidence – nor even a hypothesis – to show that al-Shāṭibī was influenced by either Ibn Taymiyah or Ibn al-Qayyim. I myself can assure him that neither of these two thinkers is mentioned anywhere in any of al-Shāṭibī's extant writings. Moreover, despite the fact that these two thinkers were well-known in the East during and after al-Shāṭibī's time, we

nevertheless find no evidence that either they or their views exerted any influence in North Africa or Andalusia during that era. In general, Ḥanbalite jurisprudence, writings and names were the least mentioned and the least influential in this (latter) region. There is a single instance in which I found al-Shāṭibī to write, “A certain Ḥanbalite has stated...,”³⁷ and this in connection with unfounded claims of consensus which had been used by some as a way of cutting off discussion of certain matters. How-ever, I consider it unlikely that al-Shāṭibī would have based this directly on some Ḥanbalite writing, and even more unlikely that he would have been acquainted with some of the writings of Ibn Taymiyah or Ibn al-Qayyim, especially in view of the fact that, unlike Ibn al-‘Arabī, al-Tarṭusī³⁸ and his shaykh Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maqqarī,³⁹ for example, al-Shāṭibī was not among those who journeyed to the East.

2. Al-Shannawi's claim that legal rulings “of all kinds” are based on unrestricted interests is highly irresponsible. For Islamic legal rulings “of all kinds” are based upon recognized legal evidence, which includes the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus and analogical deduction; hence, unrestricted interests are only one among a number of different types of evidence upon which rulings are based. Moreover, as many will be aware, those who recognize unrestricted interests employ them as the basis for only one kind of ijtihad-related ruling.
3. I do not know what is meant by the phrase, “the distinctiveness of Islamic legislation in this respect” (i.e., in respect to its consideration for unrestricted interests). This strikes me as a strange thing to say. (“And if someone were to put forward an opposing claim, he would not be far from the mark...”)⁴⁰ For what we know of the laws of nations both ancient and modern is that they are based fundamentally upon unrestricted interests, since all of their interests are ‘unrestricted.’ In fact, the interests of non-Muslim nations are more ‘unrestricted’ than those of Muslims. After all, the notion of unrestricted interests – if we adopt it in the first place – is not what sets Muslims apart from others; on the

contrary, it is common to Muslims and non-Muslims. As for what distinguishes our Islamic legislation from other types of legislation, it lies in other principles, such as those which relate to written texts. In sum, then, Islamic legislation is not distinguished by the principle of unrestricted interests; on the contrary, it is distinguished by its narrowing of the sphere of unrestricted interests and the limitations it places on the freedom to act on the basis of them.

Lastly, we come to a statement by Muhammad Abu al-Ajfan, who has benefited me greatly through his books and letters. Abu al-Ajfan speaks of al-Shāṭibī's academic contributions, foremost among them being his contribution to study of the objectives of the Law. He states "In this manner, he [al-Shāṭibī] adds significant building blocks to an edifice which had [already] been constructed by researchers into the higher objectives of the Law."⁴¹ Among such researchers, Abu al-Ajfan makes mention of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, al-Qarāfī, Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Maqqarī the grandfather who, according to Abu al-Ajfan, was "among al-Shāṭibī's shaykhs who influenced the formation of his personality and who released the flow of his genius and talent."⁴²

I would have preferred to overlook this sweeping judgment on al-Maqqarī's influence on al-Shāṭibī despite his Abu al-Ajfan's penchant for hyperbole. However, the fact that this statement comes in the context of a discussion of al-Shāṭibī's contribution to the building up of the objectives of the Law brings out this tendency with special force. This is confirmed by the fact that Abu al-Ajfan lists al-Maqqarī alongside the scholars who constructed the edifice of the objectives of the Law, which is a second exaggeration even greater than the one that preceded it.

Abu al-Ajfan may have been influenced in this connection – as he himself once indicated in a correspondence between us – by his late shaykh Ibn ‘Āshūr.⁴³ However, the relevant statement made by Ibn ‘Āshūr does not yield this sense. In the course of discussing al-Maqqarī's rules and his method of deriving principles of jurisprudence, Ibn ‘Āshūr states, "This advanced, independent interpretation-based methodology became the base for the ladder along which

Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī ascended until at last he reached the heights of definitive principles.”⁴⁴ (However, in spite of Ibn ‘Āshūr’s positive estimation of al-Maqqarī’s methodology), al-Maqqarī’s treatment of the objectives of the Law in *Qawā'id al-Fiqh* – his most important book and the most relevant to our topic – does not go beyond what was then current in most books dealing with the fundamentals of jurisprudence. We find, for example, that according to his Rule 1134, (1) the human interests recognized by Islamic Law may be divided into three classes, namely, essentials, exigencies and embellishments, (2) the first of these three is to be given priority over the second in the event that the two conflict, while the second is to be given priority over the third should the two conflict, and (3) the priority given to the prevention of harm is commensurate with the class of interests with which it is associated; in other words, prevention of harm as it relates to essentials merits higher priority than that associated with exigencies, just as that associated with exigencies should receive higher priority than that associated with embellishments. In Rule 1188, al-Maqqarī states that “all of the divinely revealed Laws are consistent in their sanctification of the five universals, namely, the faculty of reason, human life, progeny, honor, and material wealth, with some of them adding a sixth, namely, religion.”⁴⁵ In Rule 1006, he states, “One of the objectives of the Law is the preservation of people’s material wealth, which necessitates the prohibition against the squandering of such wealth and sales which involve uncertainty and risk.” And in Rule 831 he states, “Another objective of the Law is to reconcile people who are at odds and to settle their disputes.”

Al-Maqqarī may be said to have interspersed his rules with some of what was being reiterated on the subject of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* in books on jurisprudence and its fundamentals. Moreover, given the attention and care which he devoted to the theme of objectives, al-Maqqarī’s writings may have served as one of the early harbingers of the work which al-Shāṭibī⁴⁶ was destined to undertake. As for the methodological benefit to which Ibn ‘Āshūr draws attention, it may well be the most important thing which al-Shāṭibī derived from al-Maqqarī’s rules,⁴⁷ bearing in mind that al-Maqqarī was preceded in

his effort in terms of both methodology and production (as evidenced by the fact that he draws copiously upon al-Qarāfi's *al-Furūq*), and that al-Shāṭibī studied both al-Qarāfi's *al-Furūq* and al-Maqqarī's *Qawā'id al-Fiqh*.

* * * * *

The foregoing discussion of al-Maqqarī and his influence on al-Shāṭibī in the realm of *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* leads me now to speak in more general terms of the extent to which al-Shāṭibī may have benefited in this same area from his other shaykhs and from his surroundings. In this connection, I have examined numerous fatwas issued by al-Shāṭibī's most prominent contemporaries, and particularly by his own shaykhs (a task in which I was assisted by al-Wansharīsī's *al-Mī'yār*). Some of these fatwas I was able to locate in their biographies, particularly in *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*; however, I came across nothing of significance. We touched earlier upon some of al-Shāṭibī's extant correspondences; however, these, too, yield little of relevance. What adds further to the picture is that in his discussions of *al-maqāṣid*, al-Shāṭibī mentions none of his shaykhs or the scholars of his age. We have had occasion to observe some manifestations of tension and discord between al-Shāṭibī and the jurisprudents of his generation, and in fact, al-Shāṭibī was only in agreement with the most insignificant minority of them, among whom was al-Qabbāb, mufti and magistrate of Fez.

In addition, we find that al-Shāṭibī avoided relying upon the books of later scholars. When one of his companions once observed this fact and wrote to ask al-Shāṭibī about it, he replied,

As for your observation that I do not rely on later writings, this is not based merely on my own opinion. Rather, I adopted this stance based on experience in comparing the books of earlier thinkers to those of later ones. By 'later,' I mean writers such as Ibn Bashīr, Ibn Shās, Ibn al-Hājib⁴⁸ and their successors. Moreover, a certain scholar of jurisprudence with whom I have had dealings instructed me to eschew books by later scholars. He uttered harsh words about such thinkers; however, they

were words of wise counsel, and in fact, the laxness reflected in the practice of quoting from whatever book comes one's way cannot be tolerated by the religion of God.⁴⁹

As for the person who gave al-Shāṭibī this counsel and used 'harsh language' concerning later scholars of jurisprudence, it was none other than his friend and shaykh, al-Qabbāb, who described Ibn Bashīr and Ibn Shās as having "corrupted jurisprudence."⁵⁰

Consequently, al-Shāṭibī made it a policy to depend exclusively on earlier scholars; in fact, he began urging others to do the same, saying,

Hence, the books, sayings and biographies of earlier scholars are more beneficial for those who wish to be prudent in their acquisition of knowledge, of whatever sort it happens to be, but especially knowledge of Islamic Law, which is the support most unfailing and most capable of protecting [them from unfounded claims].⁵¹

Al-Shāṭibī's uncompromising position on this point and his blanket judgment regarding all types of knowledge is clearly exaggerated and unfair.⁵² Be that as it may, what concerns us here is simply to confirm that al-Shāṭibī drew primarily upon knowledge of the righteous ancestors, that is, the Companions of the Prophet, their followers, imams who had shown themselves worthy of emulation, and leading scholars of jurisprudence and its fundamentals.

Consequently his theory, and his thought as a whole, reflect sound understanding, accurate vision, and correct methodology. This is not, of course, to deny that he was receptive to guidance and warnings from later thinkers, nor that through them he passed into the 5th Century AH and the centuries preceding it. Indeed, he is certain to have received from his shaykhs what any disciple and student receives by way of preparation, training and guidance.

Innovative Aspects of al-Shāṭibī's Theory

Al-Shāṭibī's innovation in the twin realms of the fundamentals of

jurisprudence and the objectives of the Law is thus beyond dispute; indeed, all who are familiar with his work testify or make reference to his contribution. We find in *al-Muwāfaqāt* that al-Shāṭibī himself was, of all people, most aware of this fact, and the first to draw attention to his God-given creativity and innovation. As we have seen, he makes reference to these things when he speaks of the time “when the secret which had been so well concealed manifested itself, and when God in His bounty granted me access and guidance to that which He willed to reveal thereof...”⁵³

Fearing lest his innovative ideas not be well received, al-Shāṭibī seeks to reassure his readers, saying,

You may be inclined to repudiate this book, you may find it difficult to perceive its inventive and creative aspects, and you may have been beguiled – by the fact that nothing like this has ever been heard before, nor has anything like it ever been written in the realm of the traditional legal sciences – into believing that you would be better off not listening to what it has to say just as you would be better off steering clear of [unfounded] religious innovations. If so, then I urge you not to heed such doubts without putting them to the test, and not to forfeit potential benefits without forethought. For it is, thanks be to God, something which is confirmed by the verses of the Qur'an and the accounts passed down through the Prophetic Sunnah.⁵⁴

So great, in fact, was al-Shāṭibī's concern that he not be misunderstood – given the rigidity, stagnation, repetition and rehashing which were so prevalent among scholars of his day – that he actually refrained from including some of the results of his research, contenting himself instead with allusions and indirect references to them. Thus, for example, he concludes *al-Muwāfaqāt* with the following provocative words:

What I set out to accomplish, I have achieved, thanks be to God, and what was promised has been delivered. However, there remain things which it has not been possible to mention, and whose recipients – however great the thirst for such things – are few in number. Hence, fearing

lest such readers not come to drink from their springs or be able to assemble their scattered pieces in the course of this investigation, I have checked my desire to set them forth clearly, and restrained my pen and fingers from declaring them in detail. Nevertheless, throughout the book one will find faint signals and rays emanating from their brilliant sun; and those who find their way to them may hope, by God's Grace, to arrive...

In his *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, al-Tunbuktī hails *al-Muwāfaqāt* as “unparalleled.” Such praise is based undoubtedly on the book’s innovative aspects, the most important of which are those having to do with the objectives of the Law. Indeed, modern times have witnessed a steady stream of testimonies to and acclaim for al-Shāṭibī’s innovativeness and creativity. Distinguished scholar Muhammad Rashid Rida, for example, declares *al-Muwāfaqāt* to be “peerless in its category” and “without precedent,” while he describes its author as being “among the greatest innovators in Islam.”⁵⁵ Similar applause is forthcoming from Rida in his book, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām*, in which he counts al-Shāṭibī among the innovators of the 8th Century AH.⁵⁶

Rida is followed in this by ‘Abd al-Muta‘al al-Šā‘idī in his book, *al-Mujaddidūn fil-Islām min al-Qarn al-Awwal ilā al-Rābi‘ Ashar*. After summarizing what ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz has to say concerning the importance of the objectives of the Law and al-Shāṭibī’s place of distinction in bringing them to light,⁵⁷ al-Šā‘idī states, “This is a highly valuable aspect of innovation ...”⁵⁸ He then continues,

The reason that so much credit is due to al-Shāṭibī – after Imam al-Shāfi‘ī – is that he had led this modern age by granting consideration to what has come to be termed the spirit of the Shari‘ah, or the spirit of the Law. He has done so by virtue of his profound concern for the higher objectives of Islamic Law and his approach to the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence.⁵⁹

On this basis, and although he ranks such figures as Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Taymiyah and Ibn al-Qayyim above al-Shāṭibī⁶⁰, al-Šā‘idī counts al-Shāṭibī among those who brought renewal to 8th Century Islam.

Mustafa al-Zarqa describes *al-Muwāfaqāt* as “the most illustrious book we have had occasion to read in the area of the fundamentals of jurisprudence and the objectives of the Law. In it, its distinguished author may God have mercy on him, displays marvels of sound thought, keen insight into Islamic jurisprudence and original style.”⁶¹ In a similar vein, Mustafa Said al-Khinn writes about al-Shāṭibī, saying, “In this book of his, the author has trodden a singular path on which no one has gone before him,” the secret of its uniqueness lying in the fact that al-Shāṭibī “presents the fundamentals of jurisprudence as viewed through the lens of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*.⁶²

My intention in citing these testimonies, as well as others yet to come, is not to prove al-Shāṭibī’s inventiveness. Rather, I have cited them “in order that my heart may be set fully at rest,”⁶³ as well as to set at rest the hearts of my readers. In other words, to speak of al-Shāṭibī as an innovator requires a thorough familiarity with a voluminous heritage of writings and academic efforts in the realm of Islamic Law in all of its aspects, and, more specifically, in the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence. Such a familiarity requires vast reading and painstaking scrutiny of the writings of all those who went before al-Shāṭibī – a task which, needless to say, exceeds the capacities of any one individual even if he or she were to devote his or her entire lifetime to the effort, especially in view of the fact that most of the writings of relevance are still in manuscript form and unavailable, no longer in existence, or as yet undiscovered. This being the case, a single researcher’s testimony will not suffice, and no one – least of all myself – should be allowed to limit himself to his own efforts in the reading, examination, and comparison of texts. Rather, in order for the outcome of the endeavor to be credible and for all to be assured of its reliability, it is essential that all of these testimonies be brought together in order to arrive at a indisputable consensus.

At the same time, however, I can augment these attestations to al-Shāṭibī’s unique contribution by highlighting, detailing and clarifying the various aspects of his creativity and inventiveness. Some of these aspects have been pointed out and elucidated in earlier sections of this book; however, this was in the form of scattered references

which, taken alone, are not sufficient. In what follows, therefore, we will examine the most significant distinguishing features of al-Shāṭibī's innovative treatment of the objectives of the Law and his construction and exposition of the theory of objectives.

1. The Great Expansion

What I have termed 'the great expansion' is the most visible and widely recognized feature which sets al-Shāṭibī apart from those who wrote about the objectives of the Law before him. Al-Shāṭibī's predecessors treated the subject by way of references and isolated phrases which, if one gathered them all together, might come to several pages total for each writer. When al-Shāṭibī came along, however, he made 'The Book of Higher Objectives' the largest section of his *al-Muwāfaqāt*. In this way, the objectives of the Law became a visible, recognizable entity; no longer could they be disregarded, forgotten, or belittled.

Prior to this, by contrast, the theme of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* had hardly received attention from anyone but major scholars who were well-versed in Islamic Law and its related sciences. And even these individuals only realized the significance of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* within the framework of their own research, drawing upon the enlightenment which it provided in their scholarship and independent interpretations. In their dealings with the general populace, however, they contented themselves with explanations of brief principles and scattered allusions.

This issue is touched upon by one of the most prominent scholars of *maqāṣid*, namely, Ibn ‘Āshūr, who cites examples of objectives-based interpretations and references found in the writings of some early scholars, but which remained vague and scattered and in need of someone who could compile them in an organized fashion and bring out their meaning and importance. He then continues,

These scholars were followed by singular individuals who appear to me to have been deeply committed to this effort, such as Egyptian Shafi‘ite scholar Izz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn ‘Abd al-Salām in his *Qawā'id [al-*

Aḥkām fī Islāḥ al-Anām] and the Egyptian Malikite scholar Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Qarāfī in his book *al-Furūq*. These two men attempted on more than one occasion to establish [the science of] the higher objectives of the Law; however, the remarkable man who finally committed this art to writing was the Malikite scholar Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, whose example I seek to follow.⁶⁴

In the course of comparing the concern demonstrated by al-Shāṭibī for the objectives of the Law with that demonstrated by his predecessors, ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz notes in his introduction to *al-Muwāfaqāt* that those who went before al-Shāṭibī did not go beyond mere references to the objectives of the Law in the context of other discussions. Then he continues, saying,

And thus it was that the field of the fundamentals of jurisprudence continued to suffer a great lack...until God Almighty prepared Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī in the 8th Century AD to redress this need and to construct this mighty edifice.⁶⁵

Hence, the difference between the space devoted to the higher objectives of the Law by previous *uṣūl* scholars and that devoted to them by al-Shāṭibī is likened by Darrāz to the difference between a ‘reference’ and an ‘edifice.’

Employing another analogy which communicates the same message, Mustafa al-Zarqa describes the ample space which was devoted by al-Shāṭibī to the objectives of the Law by comparison with that devoted to them by his predecessors, saying, “Hence, to the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and its writings, he [al-Shāṭibī] added a creative exposition of the objectives of the Law, a topic which had previously received only scant attention in *uṣūl*-related writings despite its tremendous importance for the derivation of legal rulings. Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī had, prior to this time, planted the seed of this theme’s development in his *al-Muṣṭafā*,⁶⁶ after which al-Shāṭibī cultivated this seed with such care in his *al-Muwāfaqāt* that it grew into a luxuriant, shady garden.”⁶⁷

Ujayl al-Namashi expresses the view that the discussion of *maqāṣid*

al-Shari'ah began with al-Ghazālī in his *Shifā' al-Ghalil*. Then he states, “However, the person who brought this science to completion, filling out its details and establishing its principles, was Imam al-Shāṭibī. Indeed, what al-Shāṭibī accomplished is no less significant than what al-Shāfi'i accomplished in his book, *al-Risālah*, where he committed knowledge to writing, opened its doors and compiled the rules upon which the derivation [of legal rulings] is based.”⁶⁸ Further testimony to this point is added by Umar al-Jaydi, according to whom al-Shāṭibī stated in *al-Muwāfaqāt*

“what no one had ever stated before him, the result being that al-Shāṭibī may rightly be viewed as the first scholar to establish the science of *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*.” Then, after making reference to the contributions of some of al-Shāṭibī's predecessors, al-Jaydi states, “However, al-Shāṭibī expanded the discussion of these points in a way which is both unprecedented and unrivaled...And in so doing, al-Shāṭibī made a contribution similar to that made by al-Shāfi'i to the study of the fundamentals of jurisprudence.”⁶⁹

The importance of this aspect of al-Shāṭibī's contribution – that is, the great expansion in the amount of space devoted to the higher objectives of the Law – has nothing to do, per se, with the notability or originality of what he wrote. Rather, it consists in the mere fact of his having initiated such an expansion and devoted an entire book to this theme,⁷⁰ a book of several hundred pages which revolves in its entirety around a concern for the objectives of the Law and an examination of this theme from all of its various angles. For this in and of itself is a new type of endeavor of the utmost importance for drawing attention to the objectives of the Law and for encouraging Muslim scholars to observe them and give them the consideration they deserve. Given the fact that very few scholars and their students have yet to undertake a thorough, painstaking study of *al-Muwāfaqāt* and to benefit fully therefrom, I believe that this visible, quantitative aspect of al-Shāṭibī's work remains, to this day, a particularly exciting and salutary initiative. After all, have we not been instructed to judge things (at least in part) based on their outward, visible aspects?

It should also be noted that the space which al-Shāṭibī devotes to the objectives of the Law is not limited to ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ alone. Rather, as we have seen,⁷¹ the theme of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* holds sway over all parts of both *al-Muwāfaqāt* and al-Shāṭibī’s other writings as well. This is an entirely new step for the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and its related writings; for while the higher objectives of the Law were once no more than a specific point which might be mentioned or referred to on this or that occasion in the context of *uṣūl*-related discussions, al-Shāṭibī caused them to become a spirit which flows through most aspects of this discipline. This same spirit likewise flows with clarity and force through the discipline and world of jurisprudence by virtue of the fact that the objectives of the Law have now been introduced into the realm of *fiqh*-related independent reasoning, whether for the purpose of understanding and interpreting a text and deriving rulings therefrom, or for the purpose of arriving at a ruling on a situation about which no specific text exists, a theme to which I will return in the next and final section, God willing.

2. Human Objectives

The attention which al-Shāṭibī devotes to human objectives reveals still another aspect of the inspiration and creativity which mark his theory. The higher objectives of the Lawgiver can only be fulfilled by correcting the objectives of those answerable to the Law; hence, it is precisely al-Shāṭibī’s concern for the objectives of the Lawgiver which leads him to conclude his discussion thereof with a discussion of human objectives as well. In so doing – that is to say, by appending an analysis of human objectives to his analysis of the objectives of the Law and explicating the necessary, integral connection between them – al-Shāṭibī has introduced an entirely new element into this type of discussion.

Muslim theologians, educators, jurisprudents and scholars who concern themselves with moral purification (*al-takhalluq*) have dealt with the theme of human objectives under the rubric of intentions. In expression of this concern, Andalusian Malikite scholar Ibn Abū

Jamrah writes, "Would that there were scholars of jurisprudence whose only concern and responsibility was to instruct people in matters pertaining to the intentions with which they undertake their various tasks. For many people have been devastated by the lack of this very thing."⁷²

There can be no doubt that al-Shāṭibī benefited from and built upon what had been written by other scholars on the subject of intentions and objectives. However, he was particularly indebted in this area to his own Malikite school which, as we have made clear in earlier sections, concerns itself not only with human objectives as they pertain to Islamic forms of worship but, in addition, places paramount importance upon the human objectives which underlie all of our words, actions, transactions and behaviors.

In sum, al-Shāṭibī demonstrates unparalleled originality in the way in which he links and integrates divine and human objectives in his 'The Book of Higher Objectives,' and his treatment of human objectives based on an examination of those of the Lawgiver.

3. By What Means May the Lawgiver's Higher Objectives Be Known?⁷³

Like his integration of divine and human objectives, al-Shāṭibī's treatment of the question of how the Lawgiver's higher objectives may be known is an entirely new addition to the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Despite its newness, it is of the utmost significance and seriousness, since everything which is said about objectives, every expansion in the discussion thereof and every new discovery of universals pertaining thereto is dependent upon the establishment of a precise, suitable method for ascertaining the objectives of the Lawgiver. This fact can help us to realize the momentousness of the service which al-Shāṭibī was rendering when he introduced this theme. As I see it, the mere fact of al-Shāṭibī's having raised this question in a discussion devoted specially to this theme is of even greater importance than what he wrote therein, however important it may be. His deliberate, independent treatment of this topic parallels his treatment of the larger theme of objectives in a separate book ('The Book of Higher

Objectives'); at the same time, what he has to say about the manner in which the Lawgiver's objectives may be determined in a variety of situations is analogous to the objectives-inspired observations which he makes elsewhere in his writings.

If, by devoting an entire book to the theme of higher objectives, al-Shāṭibī was bringing this area of inquiry a significant step forward, then by devoting a separate discussion to the question of "how the Lawgiver's higher objectives may be known" and placing it among his other objectives-related discussions, he was taking a further creative step and introducing renewal in the broadest sense of this term. By means of this discussion in particular, al-Shāṭibī opened the door for scholars to enter truly into the world of objectives and mine its hidden treasures. At the same time, this theme still calls for further discussion, expansion and definition; in response to this need, it has been discussed by Ibn ‘Āshūr, who offers new observations and cites relevant examples; contributions have likewise been forthcoming from Abd al-Majid al-Najjar in an article devoted specially to this topic.⁷⁴

4. A Wealth of Principles

Al-Shāṭibī had a passionate concern for the compilation and precise formulation of comprehensive rules. Such comprehensive rules or principles in any discipline or science are, of course, the underpinnings upon which the science in question rests and by means of which it is regulated; it is within the framework of such principles that its particulars are ordered and its theories developed. In this, then, we have further evidence of al-Shāṭibī's having been a seminal thinker, who formulated literally scores of principles which encapsulate the numerous aspects of the objectives theory and light the path ahead for us.

Of these principles I have compiled a number which I find to be the clearest and most fully developed and have ordered them within the categories to which they apply, namely: (1) the higher objectives of the Lawgiver, (2) human objectives, and (3) how the objectives of the Lawgiver may be known. For the most part, the principles are

worded as al-Shāṭibī originally formulated them. In some cases I have paraphrased them by way of joining two or more principles into one, completion, or abridgement; however, the modification remains minimal and has no impact on the principles' original meaning.

Each principle below is followed by numbers representing the part and page number from which it is taken in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, with additional page numbers indicating repetitions and clarifications. If the number of the part in which the principle is found is preceded by the letter *I*, this is a reference to *al-I‘tiṣām*.

Maqāṣid-Related Principles

a) Higher Objectives of the Lawgiver

1. Divinely revealed laws were all established in order to preserve human interests both in this world and the next (2:6).
2. An inductive reading of the texts of Islamic Law, including those with both universal and particular import, demonstrates definitively that the Lawgiver's intention is to preserve interests on three levels, namely, essentials, exigencies and embellishments (2:49–51).
3. Interests classified as essentials (*al-ḍarūriyyāt*) are those which are necessary for the achievement of human beings' spiritual and material well-being and in the absence of which people's earthly interests will suffer harm, thereby leading to corruption, disorder and the loss of life in this world, and in the next world, to the loss of ultimate spiritual well-being and felicity (2:8).
4. Exigencies (*al-hājiyyāt*) are those things which are required for ease and comfort and the elimination of distress and hardship, though their absence does not necessarily result in overall corruption or serious harm (2:11).
5. The term 'embellishments' (*al-taḥṣīniyyāt*) refers to the adoption of suitable, worthy customs and habits and virtual morals and the avoidance of dishonorable (practices and) conditions which would be unacceptable to those with sound minds and perceptive faculties (2:11).

6. There are five essentials, namely, religion, human life, progeny, material wealth, and the faculty of reason (2:10).
7. The Muslim nation, indeed, all religions, agree unanimously on the necessity of preserving these five essentials (1:38 and 2:255); and the same applies to exigencies and embellishments (3:117).
8. The five aforementioned necessities are rooted in the Qur'an and detailed in the Prophetic Sunnah (4:27).
9. The essential objectives of the Law serve as the foundation for exigencies and embellishments (2:16).
10. Each of the three aforementioned types of interests (essentials, exigencies and embellishments) has complements; however, the absence of such complements will not undermine the fundamental wise purpose which underlies them (2:12).
11. Each complement, insofar as it is a complement, is bound by a condition, namely, that its presence must not have the effect of nullifying the interest with which it is associated (2:13).
12. Taken as a whole, either the exigencies or the embellishments might be viewed as equivalent to one of the essentials (2:23).
13. None of the universal principles pertaining to the essentials, exigencies or embellishments has been abrogated; rather, anything which has been abrogated is on the level of particulars (3:105, 117).
14. An action which has more beneficial effects than harmful effects, then it is this benefit which is taken into consideration by the Law, and it is for the sake of its attainment that human beings are urged or commanded to engage in said action. And conversely, an action which has more harmful effects than beneficial ones, it is this harm which is taken into consideration by the Law, and it is for the sake of its elimination that the Law prohibits the action concerned (2:26-27).
15. It may be understood based on the precepts which the Lawgiver has established that the significance of a given act of obedience or disobedience increases in proportion to the benefit or harm which results therefrom. Moreover, the greatest benefits are associated with the preservation of the five essentials recognized by every (divinely revealed) religion, while the most serious

harm is that which results from the violation of these same essentials (2:298-299).

16. Depending on the seriousness of the harm resulting (from a given action), there will be either latitude or strictness with respect to *sadd al-dharā'i*^c, that is, the prohibition of evasive legal devices, or of anything which has the potential of leading to said action (*I*, 1:104).
17. The avoidance of that which is prohibited is treated by Islamic Law with greater urgency and seriousness than is the performance of that which is commanded; similarly, the Law places higher priority on the prevention of harm than it does on the achievement of benefit (4:272).
18. The desired or ideal response to legal rulings pertaining to acts of worship is that of unquestioning obedience without concern for their underlying purposes, whereas the desired or ideal response to legal rulings pertaining to daily transactions is that of attention to their underlying purposes (2:300 and *I*, 2:135).
19. The overall objective of rulings which call for unquestioning obedience is that human beings learn to submit to God's commands, to hold Him in awe and reverence, to extol His Majesty and to turn to Him (2:301).
20. The creation of the earthly realm is based on the bestowal of blessings on God's servants in order that they might receive them, enjoy them and give thanks to God for them, and that He, in turn, might reward them in the life to come; these two objectives are among the most prominent objectives of Islamic Law (2:321).
21. The objective underlying the establishment of the Law is to deliver human beings from enslavement to their selfish whims and desires in order that they might be God's servants by choice just as they are His servants out of necessity (2:168).
22. The Law was established in order to bring human beings' desires into subjection to the Lawgiver's objectives. At the same time, God has granted human beings sufficient latitude with respect to the satisfaction of their desires and the pursuit of enjoyment that (the situation in which they find themselves)

- need not lead either to harm and corruption or to hardship (1:377).
23. The hardship involved in resisting one's desires is not among the types of hardship taken into consideration by the Law; hence, no allowances are provided in order to alleviate it (1:337 and 2:153).
 24. If someone comes seeking a legal opinion on a particular matter, the practice of granting him or her a choice between two courses of action⁷⁵ is contrary to the objective of the Law, since it opens the door to the gratification of one's selfish desires, whereas the objective of the Lawgiver is to deliver us from them (4:262).
 25. The Lawgiver does not command any action with the intention of causing us hardship or pain (2:121).
 26. It is unanimously agreed that the Lawgiver intends for human beings to perform actions which entail a certain degree of effort and hardship. However, He does not intend the hardship for its own sake; rather, what He intends is the benefits which accrue to human beings as a result of performing such actions (2:123-124).
 27. If the hardship entailed by a given requirement of the Law is so extreme that it undermines someone's spiritual integrity or material well-being, then the Law's objective is to eliminate it, other things being equal (2:156).
 28. If the hardship being endured is not inordinate, then, although it is not the Lawgiver's objective as such for such hardship to occur, neither is it His objective to eliminate it (2:156).
 29. *'Azīmah* (the original, established intention behind a given action commanded by the Law) is the rule, while *rukhsah* (the type of allowance granted in connection with certain actions commanded by the Law for the purpose of alleviating hardship) is the exception; hence, the *'azīmah* embodies the Lawgiver's primary intention, while the *rukhsah* embodies a secondary intention (1:351-353).
 30. The hardships which underlie the granting of allowances (pl. *rukhas*, sing. *rukhsah*)⁷⁶ are not something which the Law-

maker intends in and of themselves; nor are they something which He intends to eliminate (1:350).

31. If it appears at first that the Lawgiver's intention or objective is to require of human beings that which is beyond their ability, it will become clear through further investigation that this is explainable on the basis of events or conditions which precede, accompany or follow the action in question (2:107).
32. The ideal which all legal rulings are intended to achieve is moderation, and this by steering a middle course between the two extremes of excessive austerity and excessive laxity. Hence, if one observes a tendency (in a legal ruling) toward one of these two extremes, this is due to the fact that the ruling in question is intended to counter an opposing tendency in human beings, be it actual or anticipated (2:163-167).
33. Among the Lawgiver's intentions with respect to (virtuous) actions is that human beings should persevere in them (2:242).

b) Human Objectives

34. Actions are as good as the intentions which underlie them; hence, human intentions are given consideration in (evaluating) conduct in the realms of both worship and daily transactions (2:323).
35. Objectives are the spirit of actions (2:344).
36. The Lawgiver's objective for human beings is for their intention in what they do to be in agreement with His intention in laying down legislation, and for them not to intend anything which would be in conflict with His intention (2:331).
37. If anyone seeks, by doing what the Law commands, to accomplish an end other than that for the sake of which such commands were given, his action is rendered invalid (2:333).
38. If anyone seeks to achieve an interest in a manner other than that sanctioned by the Law, he or she is actually working against the interest in question (1:349).
39. Seeking out hardship for its own sake is unacceptable, since it is in conflict with the Lawgiver's intent, and because God has not established self-torment as a means of drawing near to Him

- or attaining to His presence (2:129 and 134, and *I*, 1:341).
40. One should not seek out hardship in view of the great reward which it brings. However, one may seek to perform an action which carries a great reward due to the hardship it involves, not for the sake of the hardship, but for the sake of the action itself (2:128).
 41. When performing obligations relating to daily customs and transactions, it is sufficient, in order for the action to be valid, that one's aim in performing it not be in conflict with that of the Lawgiver; it is not necessary, however, that there be outward, visible conformity to the divine objective (1:257).
 42. In financial matters, there is no distinction between the presence and absence of intention; hence, in the determination of penalties to be imposed for (having caused) financial loss or harm, an error is viewed as tantamount to a deliberate action (2:347).
 43. When concerning oneself with causes, it is not necessary that one aim to achieve their associated outcomes; rather, all that is required of the individual is that he act in conformity with the relevant legal rulings (1:193).
 44. Acting to bring about a cause is tantamount to bringing about its effect, whether one intended to bring it about or not (1:211).

c) How the Higher Objectives of the Lawgiver May Be Known

45. Identification of the higher objectives of the Lawgiver is not based on opinions and unfounded conjectures (1:80).
46. The enjoinder of an action necessitates that the Lawgiver's objective be the performance of the action enjoined, while the prohibition of an action necessitates that the (Lawgiver's) intention be the prevention of the action prohibited (2:393 and 3:122).
47. The basis for a legal ruling serves as evidence of the Lawgiver's relevant objective or intention; hence, whenever such a basis is known, it is to be heeded (2:394 and 3:154).
48. The commendation of an action is evidence that the Lawgiver intends for such an action to be performed, while the condemnation of an action indicates that the divine intention is for it

not to be performed (2:242).

49. Gratitude for blessings engenders an awareness of the (divine) intention that human beings receive such blessings, take pleasure in them, and give thanks for them (1:117 and 126).
50. Every principle which is in keeping with the actions of the Lawgiver and whose meaning is derived from sufficiently numerous and varied pieces of evidence that it may be affirmed with definitive certainty may be built upon and treated as authoritative even if it is not attested to by any specific text (1:39).
51. The establishment of causes necessitates that the One who established them (that is, God Almighty) intend their outcomes as well (1:194).
52. Whatever serves to complement and reinforce an objective of the Law may be viewed accordingly as an objective of the Law (2:397).
53. If the Lawgiver is silent on a given matter despite the existence of a situation which calls for a ruling thereon, this silence may be taken as evidence that the divine intention is for human beings to stop at the presently existing limits and legislation just as they are (2:410 and I, 1:361).
54. If we understand a legal ruling to have a particular wise purpose which will stand on its own, this does not necessarily preclude the same ruling's having numerous other wise purposes as well (2:311).

[II]

Higher Objectives / Intents and Ijtihad

Throughout the course of this book, in our presentation of al-Shāṭibī's theory of higher objectives, in our discussion of its extensions into and implications for various *uṣūl*-related discussions, in our treatment of its fundamental issues, as well as in the course of highlighting its innovative aspects, we have had occasion to elucidate

the importance of what this theory has to offer. However, what we are about to touch upon in the coming pages is by far the most significant contribution made by al-Shāṭibī's theory; it is the theory's *raison d'être* and the greatest benefit it has to offer. Specifically, what I am referring to is its influence on our understanding of Islamic Law and the application of independent reasoning, or *ijtihad*, to its rulings, as well as our ability to receive its guidance and live in accordance with its purposes. In this respect, the brilliant al-Shāṭibī⁷⁷ has made it possible for those who concern themselves with Islamic Law and the proper understanding thereof to explore its secrets and wise purposes. He has prepared the way for them to deal with its universals and overall purposes alongside its texts and particulars. And in so doing, he has provided Islamic jurisprudence and thought with a means of rebirth and renewal which they had sorely lacked.

One thinker who has labored in this field, namely, Mustafa al-Zarqa, draws attention to the major role al-Shāṭibī has come to play today for scholars and students of Islamic Law, saying,

From the time he published his book, *al-I'tiṣām* on heresies and his other book, *al-Muwāfaqāt fi uṣūl al-Shari'ah*⁷⁸ – both of which were like hidden treasures [now unearthed] – al-Shāṭibī's name was on the lips of scholars and jurisprudents. These two books, particularly *al-Muwāfaqāt*, became the primary mainstays of the heritage to which professors and advanced students of Islamic Law appealed as a means of deepening their understanding of their studies and providing support and documentation for what they wrote. Al-Shāṭibī's star thus began to rise in the East, after which it grew brighter and brighter until its light was sought out in studies of the fundamentals and higher objectives of Islamic Law and as a means of clarifying arguments and establishing the proper path.⁷⁹

These last lines of al-Zarqa are reminiscent of words by al-Shāṭibī which, oddly, appear to have been the last thing he wrote. Writing in *al-I'tiṣām* not long before his death, he states, "Having established that the truth is that to which consideration is due regardless of what human beings have to say, it must likewise be affirmed that the truth

nevertheless can only be known through human mediation; indeed, it is [only] through human beings that the truth can be reached, since it is they who serve as the guides along its path.”⁸⁰

In keeping with this established fact of human history in general, and of the academic realm in particular, al-Shāṭibī has become a recognized authority on Islamic Law, a signpost along the path leading to its objectives and purposes, and a guide to its wise purposes and mysteries. In the course of discussing *al-Muwāfaqāt*, Muḥammad al-Fāḍil ibn Ḥasan writes,

By means of this work, al-Shāṭibī has erected a towering pyramid to Islamic culture and civilization, and from this vantage point he has been able to envisage methods and approaches to the immortalization and safeguarding of the religion which few before him perceived. Consequently, those who delve into the meanings and mysteries of the Law owe him no small debt. The distinctiveness of this book emerged in a remarkable way during the last two centuries when, in the course of recovering from a period of decline, the Islamic world was finding it difficult to harmonize the rulings of the religion with the realities of modern life, and [for those facing this challenge], al-Shāṭibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt* proved to be a refuge and a source of authoritative counsel.⁸¹

However, al-Shāṭibī did not content himself with broadening and deepening the science of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, nor with constructing an integrated theory on this basis or forging new paths for research and discovery in the study of the higher objectives of the Law. Rather, not willing to leave the benefits of what he had done exclusively to the intellectual elite or to the initiative of those well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence, he took it upon himself to ensure that his efforts had achieved their purpose and yielded their intended fruits. To this end, he persevered in his labors until he had introduced the discipline of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* into the realm of ijtihad and introduced ijtihad into the world of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, thereby reviving and strengthening the intimate ties which had always bound them.

Objectives and the Prerequisites for the Practice of Ijtihad

Al-Shāṭibī appears to have been the first to stipulate, as the first prerequisite for ijtiḥad, that one have “a thorough understanding of the higher objectives of the Law,”⁸² while his second and final condition was “the ability to draw inferences based on one’s understanding thereof,”⁸³ that is, based on one’s understanding of these objectives.

For a number of centuries, *uṣūliyyūn* were engaged in drawing up a long list of conditions which had to be met by the *mujtahid* and the academic degrees he had to have completed, with some of them lengthening the list and others shortening it.⁸⁴ When al-Shāṭibī appeared on the scene, he spurned such lists, both long and short, choosing instead to limit the prerequisites for the practice of ijtiḥad to a single, inclusive qualification, namely, an understanding of the higher objectives of the Law so thorough that one could draw inferences in light thereof.

In making this observation, my intention is not to say that the scholars of jurisprudence and its fundamentals who preceded al-Shāṭibī lacked an awareness of the objectives of the Law and their essential importance to the *mujtahid*. Rather, I simply mean to say that between al-Shāṭibī and those who preceded him in the discussion of ijtiḥad and its prerequisites, there are significant differences which will become increasingly clear in what follows. Nor do I mean to express agreement with the position taken by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz when, by way of comment on al-Shāṭibī’s stipulation that in order to qualify for the practice of ijtiḥad, one must have an understanding of the objectives of the Law, he states,

Among *uṣūliyyūn*, we have encountered no one who mentions the condition to which he [al-Shāṭibī] gives highest priority, and which, indeed, he makes into the basic foundation [for ijtiḥad]. As for the ability to draw inferences, this is the condition to which the well-known books on *uṣūl* limited themselves, and proof of which they sought in [one’s] knowledge of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, that is to say, those aspects thereof which pertain to legal rulings. In addition, they looked

for a knowledge of those points on which there is consensus [among Muslim scholars], the conditions for the validity of analogical induction, the means by which investigations are to be conducted, the science of the Arabic language, those verses of the Qur'an which have abrogated other verses thereof, and knowledge of how to assess the reliability of narrators... I then found in al-Shawkānī's *Irshād al-Fuhūl* that al-Ghazālī quotes al-Shāfi'ī as making statements to the effect that universal principles are to be given priority over particulars.⁸⁵

Contrary to Darrāz's assertion here, there are, in fact, those who preceded al-Shātibī – in some cases explicitly and in others, implicitly – in stipulating knowledge of *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* as a prerequisite for the practice of ijtihad. This condition is stipulated expressly in some well-known books on the fundamentals of jurisprudence, the most famous of which is *Jam' al-Jawāmi'* including, Ibn al-Subkī's *Jam' al-Jawāmi'*. After discussing the sciences with which the *mujtahid* needs to be familiar, Ibn al-Subkī quotes his father's definition of the *mujtahid*: “[He] stated that he [the *mujtahid*] is someone who has a natural aptitude for these sciences, who is acquainted with most of the principles pertaining to Islamic Law, and who has applied these principles with sufficient regularity that he has acquired the ability to discern the Lawgiver's intent.”⁸⁶

In his commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's *Minhāj al-Wuṣūl ilā 'Ilm al-uwāl*, Ibn al-Subkī declares that when a scholar fulfills the conditions for becoming a *mujtahid*, including “familiarity with the higher objectives of the Law and experience in exploring their depths,”⁸⁷ it becomes permissible to emulate him as al-Shāfi'ī and other imams have been emulated. It is clear that, as Ibn al-Subkī himself declares forthrightly, he stipulates knowledge of the objectives of the Law as a prerequisite for ijtihad in emulation of his father Ḥalī ibn Ḥabd al-Kāfī. In his introduction to *Sharḥ al-Minhāj*, Ibn al-Kāfī states that full qualification for the rank of *mujtahid* depends on three things, the third of which is “that one have sufficient experience in the investigation of and adherence to the higher objectives of the Law that one is able to perceive whence the Law springs, and what would be an appropriate ruling in this or that situation even if this is not directly stated...”⁸⁸

Al-Suyūṭī quotes Amīn al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī in his *al-Tanqīḥ* as saying that “the knowledge of how to enumerate the evidences in support of a legal ruling depends upon a thorough, inductive reading of the entire contents of both the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and an understanding of their objectives.”

As noted by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz earlier, al-Shawkānī’s quote from al-Ghazālī,⁸⁹ indicating that al-Shāfi‘ī made note of universal principles and gave them priority over particulars,⁹⁰ this is mentioned by al-Ghazālī in *al-Mankhūl*, pp.366-367.

As we have noted, *al-Mankhūl* is based in its entirety on the writings of al-Juwainī. And in fact, al-Juwainī deals with this topic in *al-Burhān*, where he lists the sources on which al-Shāfi‘ī based ijtiḥad. Specifically, he relied (first) on the Qur’ān, followed by reports classified as *mutawātirah*,^{*} followed by reports classified as *āḥād*,^{*} followed by the apparent meanings of the Qur’ān (unless they are passages addressed to a particular individual or group), followed by the apparent meanings of traditions passed down on the authority of the Prophet or his Companions (first those classified as *mutawātirah*, then those classified as *āḥād*). Then he states,

If one does not find what one is looking for by moving through these steps, one should not yet resort to *qiyās*. Rather, one should look to the universals of the Law and the overall interests it is intended to serve. Al-Shāfi‘ī considered this art to include application of the law of retaliation to cases of murder committed with a heavy object, since its negation⁹¹ violates the principle of deterrence. If one perceives no general interest in the event or action concerned, one should look to those points on which there is unanimous agreement, and if this also is not to be found, one may resort to *qiyās*.⁹²

My concern here is not with this particular manner of ordering and prioritizing different types of evidence, or whether it represents the way in which Imam al-Shāfi‘ī actually approached the process of ijtiḥad or is simply a reconstruction based on inferences drawn by al-Juwainī. Rather, what is of concern to me in this quotation is the evidence it provides of the fact that when he engaged in ijtiḥad,

Imam al-Shāfi‘ī “looked to the universals of the Law and the overall benefits which it seeks to achieve.” In other words, he looked to the overall objectives of the Law and employed them as the basis for his interpretations and decisions. What makes this all the more significant, moreover, is the fact that of all the four imams,⁹³ al-Shāfi‘ī depended the least on the notions of interests and objectives.

Explicit statements by Shafi‘ite *uṣūliyyūn* affirming that Imam al-Shāfi‘ī followed this approach to ijtihad is an implicit acknowledgement that (1) the practice of ijtihad requires knowledge of the higher objectives of the Law and (2) that it is necessary to observe and build upon these objectives. Moreover, in keeping with this recognition is al-Juwainī’s statement that if a given instance of *qiyās* is inconsistent with the preservation of the five essential interests recognized by Islamic Law, the *qiyās* should be abandoned in favor of the general principles which (apply to the situation at hand and which) call for the preservation of these essentials. Al-Juwainī states, “One of the distinguishing features of this approach is that if an analogy (*qiyās*) applicable to a particular situation or action runs counter to a general rule, the analogy in question must be abandoned – however obvious it happens to be – in favor of the general rule.”⁹⁴

In illustration of this type of situation, he cites the example of putting an entire group to death in retaliation for the death of a single individual, which runs counter to the *qiyās* which requires parity (one life for another). The preservation of human life, which is among the most foundational objectives of the Lawgiver, requires that an entire group be put to death if they took part jointly in murdering a single person, since otherwise, others would be tempted to resort to joint murder as a means of escaping the law of retaliation. This type of ruling manifests clear reliance on the essential objectives of the Law, which are given priority over the results obtained from *qiyās* based on particular situations.

Al-Ghazālī states, “We sometimes treat human interests as a sign which points to a given ruling, while at other times we treat the ruling as a sign which points to particular human interests.”⁹⁵ As we have seen, al-Ghazālī only recognizes human interests if it is apparent that they are intended by the Lawgiver. Hence, what this state-

ment of his means is that the objectives of the Lawgiver may be taken as evidence in favor of a given ruling, while a given ruling may likewise be taken as evidence of the Lawgiver's higher objectives, which requires that the person engaged in *ijtihad* be familiar with the objectives of the Law.

As we have seen, *uṣūliyyūn* have introduced the objectives of the Law into the practice of prioritizing (among various interests, rulings, etc.), stipulating that essentials are to be given priority over exigencies, and exigencies over embellishments; in addition, they prioritize among the essentials themselves. In so doing, they are stipulating implicitly that knowledge of the objectives of the Law is necessary for anyone who wishes to engage in *ijtihad* and to prioritize among various bases (for legal rulings) and objectives. After all, no one can properly prioritize among the objectives of the Law but those with a proper knowledge thereof.

Al-Qarāfī stipulates explicitly the importance of knowledge of the objectives of the Law, not only for those who engage in *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning, but even for jurisprudents who are imitating their forebears; he also acknowledges, of course, that each group – those who engage in independent reasoning and those who imitate them – has its own unique role and status. He states,

However, if he [i.e., the jurisprudent who is emulating the example of his imam] encounters a case which he has not memorized, he should not base his judgment on the cases which he has memorized; nor should he say, "This is similar to such-and-such a case," since this is only permissible for someone who has a thorough, detailed familiarity with the perceptions of his imam and the evidences, analogies and *'ilal* upon which he relied, as well as knowledge of the ranking of such *'ilal*, how they are related to legally recognized human interests, and whether such interests are classified as essentials, exigencies or embellishments. The reason for this is that the individual who studies the teachings of his school and who bases rulings on the fundamentals established by his imam will be related to his school and his imam as his imam is related to the Originator of the Law in terms of adhering to its texts and basing rulings on its objectives.⁹⁶

Hence, the objectives of the Law must be known by those who engage in ijтиhad in order for them to be able to base rulings thereon. Moreover, they must also be known by the jurisprudent who is emulating his imam, since his imam's understanding was based on these objectives; hence, he will not be able to issue fatwas in accordance with this understanding or base rulings upon it unless he is familiar with the objectives upon which it is founded and the human interests which it seeks to preserve.

* * * * *

And now, let us return to al-Shāfi‘ī. As we saw earlier, the first and most important prerequisite which al-Shāfi‘ī stipulates for the ability to engage in ijтиhad is an irreproachable knowledge of the higher objectives of the Law. He states, “If one reaches a point where he perceives the Lawgiver’s intention as it pertains to every question of the Law and every area thereof, he will have achieved a station which qualifies him to serve as the Prophet’s vicegerent in the realms of instruction and the issuance of legal decisions and rulings concerning what God wills.”⁹⁷

What qualifies one person to represent another and to speak in his name is that he possess intimate knowledge of this person’s intentions and objectives, from the most general to the most specific. By comparison with this, all else is merely auxiliary. Hence, the person who engages in ijтиhad, who judges and issues legal decisions in the name of the Lawgiver must, first and foremost, be thoroughly knowledgeable of His overall objectives, as well as of the specific aim – or objectives – which pertain to the issue in relation to which he is engaging in ijтиhad and issuing a ruling.

And thus it is al-Shāfi‘ī that has elevated the role and status of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* as they pertain to the practice of ijтиhad to the loftiest heights. As a result, the objectives of the Law are no longer a matter of a few nebulous words which might, or might not, be tacked onto the end of a long list of conditions required of the mujtahid and which hardly receive any notice from the serious student, much less the superficial reader. (Even Darrāz – himself a seasoned

uṣūl scholar – disregards them entirely.) On numerous occasions and by means of various approaches, al-Shāṭibī seeks to affirm and establish the importance and necessity of attention to the objectives of the Law on the part of those engaged in ijtihad. In this connection, he draws attention to the fact that a scholar engaged in ijtihad might in some situations be unmindful of the higher objectives of the Law despite his knowledge of them, and that should this happen, he is bound to err in his conclusions. He states, “Errors committed by scholars most frequently occur when they fail to take account of the objectives of the Law as they pertain to the particular situation to which they are applying independent reasoning.”⁹⁸

And if this is the situation of a scholar with expertise in the higher objectives of the Law, then how much more prone to error will be those who fall short of this standard! Consequently, we find that when al-Shāṭibī rails against those with a distorted understanding of the religion and its Law, he identifies ignorance of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* as the cause, or at least, one of the causes behind the problem. Among those whom he criticizes are individuals who consider themselves qualified to engage in ijtihad and who, as a consequence, approach the religion’s Law and legal rulings with a kind of recklessness. In fact, there are those who

take some of its particulars and proceed, by means of these particulars, to tear down its universals in order to support the conclusion which agrees with their initial, unstudied impression of things. They do this without a full understanding of the meanings of the Law or even an acknowledgement of their need for such an understanding. Moreover, this phenomenon is reinforced by ignorance of the objectives of the Law and the illusion that one has attained the rank of *mujtahid*.⁹⁹

In the same vein, al-Shāṭibī refers to those who advocate heretical teachings¹⁰⁰; such people, follow their own caprices and support “adherence to the superficial meanings of the Qur’ān without reflection on or investigation into its objectives and that which binds its various parts into a consistent whole.”¹⁰¹

Such people also include those who adhere to allegorical texts of

the Qur'an (*al-mutashābihāt*),¹⁰² who take particular texts and isolate them from the fundamentals and universals of the religion, after which, by means of these allegorical texts, they launch assaults on those texts which are clear in and of themselves (*al-muhkāmāt*) and the religion's most fundamental premises. Al-Shāṭibī states, "The basis for the errors committed in this connection is, quite simply, ignorance of the higher objectives of the Lawgiver and a failure to bring together their various strands. As for those imams who are firmly established in knowledge, they approach evidence by treating the Law as an integrated whole based on its established universals, with its particulars being ordered in accordance therewith." He then continues, saying, "Hence, those firmly established in knowledge view the Law as an integrated whole whose every part – like the members of the human body – is in the service of every other. As for those who cling to *al-mutashābihāt*, they arbitrarily latch onto some piece of textual evidence and treat it as their point of reference even if it happens to be in conflict with some universal or another specific text. However, a single member cannot yield a reliable judgment rooted in a genuine understanding of the rulings of the Law."¹⁰³

A comprehensive, harmonious perspective on the Law and its rulings is only possible for those who have an intimate, thorough familiarity with the higher objectives of the Law and who have mastered its universals and who view legal rulings in light of this knowledge and understanding. Those who fail to attain this vision are bound to fall into confusion and turmoil, as a result of which they either utter statements which run counter to the objectives of the Lawgiver, or end up in a state of impotence and withdrawal, leaving to Caesar that which is not Caesar's. After all, the higher objectives of the Law are not merely a means of correcting and developing the process of *ijtihad* but, in addition, of expanding this process and enabling it to absorb life in all of its vicissitudes and ramifications. Concerning this al-Shāṭibī writes, "By identifying and paying proper attention to the bases of legal rulings (*al-'ilal*), the *mujtahid* expands the domain of his *ijtihad*. Otherwise, he will only be able to issue judgments in accordance with human interests based on a specific text or the consensus of the Muslim community."¹⁰⁴ If we simply take texts literally

or at face value, we restrict their domain and diminish what they have to offer. If, on the other hand, we understand them in light of their bases and objectives, they become an abundant reservoir of aid and guidance: the door to *qiyās* is opened wide, as is the door to *istiṣlāh*, and legal rulings take their natural course in achieving the higher objectives of the Lawgiver by bringing benefit and preventing harm.

As a result of al-Shāṭibī's having given *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* this lofty status and weighty significance in the practice of *ijtihad*, scholars today have adopted his approach as well. That is to say, they highlight the necessity and usefulness of the objectives of the Law for all independent reasoning, be it in the realm of jurisprudence (that is, the process of deriving legal rulings), or in the realm of intellectual activity in general. Allal al-Fasi declares:

...the objectives of the Law are the enduring, authoritative source of all that is needed for legislation and judicial functions in Islamic jurisprudence. They are not external to Islamic Law; on the contrary, they lie at its very core. Nor are they obscure like natural law, whose limit and source are not known. Moreover, when necessary, the objectives of the Law exert influence even over that which is stated explicitly [in legal texts].¹⁰⁵

In illustration of this point, al-Fasi cites the example of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s decision during a year of famine to suspend the prescribed punishment for theft, since he realized that the Lawgiver’s intention in prescribing such a punishment is to penalize transgressors and to deter them from further transgression. However, someone who steals out of necessity is not a transgressor; rather, the transgressor is someone who is wealthy while others around him are hungry to the point of dire need. God has pardoned those who are in dire need; hence, how could He impose on them the prescribed punishment for theft?

In his book, *Falsafat al-Tashrī‘ al-Islāmī*, al-Fasi criticizes Subhi Mahmasani for declaring the higher objectives of the Law to be among the external sources of Islamic legislation.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, distinguished scholar Ibn ‘Āshūr stresses the importance of the objectives of the Law for jurisprudence-related ijтиhad. In a chapter entitled, “The jurisprudent’s need for familiarity with the objectives of the Law,” Ibn ‘Āshūr breaks down ijтиhad in the realm of Islamic Law into the following five tasks or areas:

1. Arriving at an understanding of the Law’s affirmations and texts in accordance with the dictates of the Arabic language and of Islamic legal terminology.
2. Investigating whether there are considerations which would conflict with the text in question, such as another text which is said to abrogate it, restrictions on or specifications of its meaning or application, or some other text which there is good reason to give priority over the text at hand.
3. Ascertaining the bases, or *‘ilal*, of legal rulings and engaging in *qiyās* on the basis thereof.
4. Arriving at judgments concerning situations which are not mentioned in any specific legal text and concerning which there is no consensus.
5. Affirming those rulings which are classified as *ta‘abuddiyah* just as they are.

These, then, are the five areas of ijтиhad in which, according to Ibn ‘Āshūr, “the scholar of jurisprudence needs to be familiar with the higher objectives / intents of the Law...”¹⁰⁷ There follows a lengthy explanation of these areas; despite its length, however, I would like to quote what Ibn ‘Āshūr has to say concerning the importance of the higher objectives of the Law for the fourth ijтиhad-related area mentioned above, namely, independent reasoning relating to situations which receive no mention in any particular legal text or instance of *qiyās*. In this connection he states,

The need for knowledge of the higher objectives of the Law in the fourth area is self-evident. It is labor in this area which has ensured the ongoing issuance of Islamic legal rulings throughout the ages and generations since the time of the Lawgiver, and which will ensure the same

for all ages and generations till the end of time. It was in relation to this area that Mālik, may God have mercy on him, demonstrated the validity and relevance of unrestricted interests; moreover, it was concerning this area that the [four] imams affirmed the importance of preserving the [five or six] essential universals of the Law as well as the exigencies and embellishments.¹⁰⁸

In another chapter entitled, “Verbal evidence pertaining to the Law is no substitute for knowledge of its objectives,” Ibn ‘Āshūr affirms the need to interpret texts in accordance with their objectives as indicated by various sorts of external contextual signs. He reproaches those who deal with texts in the abstract, that is, in isolation from the contexts which indicate their objectives and true meanings, saying,

... certain scholars are remiss, embroiling themselves in untold errors due to the fact that, in the process of deriving legal rulings, they restrict themselves to a consideration of verbal evidence, content to base their views on words alone. Such scholars ponder, reflect on and analyze such words, hoping to extract their inner meaning, yet all the while neglecting to make use of the connections, associations, agreed-upon terms and contexts which encompass speech from all sides and the importance of which we have noted.¹⁰⁹

Approaches to *Maqāṣid*-Based Ijtihad

A great deal has already been said about *Maqāṣid*-based ijtiḥad, examples of which show that this practice is deeply rooted in our juristic heritage and that it grows out of the nature of Islamic Law itself, being attested to in its texts and principles. What I wish to do now, then, is to gather together the scattered references to this theme and to add whatever I can in the hope of, at the very least, approaching the goal I have set myself, namely, to identify the most important approaches to objectives-based ijtiḥad. It will not suffice for us simply to stress the importance of the higher objectives of the Law, affirming their necessity in the practice of ijtiḥad and reiterating the

fact that the leading imams adopted an objectives-based approach in their practice of *ijtihad*. Rather, we need to work, little by little, toward specifying the areas in which such objectives-based *ijtihad* is applicable and identifying the signposts which can guide us along the path. This is a task of manifest difficulty and solemnity; even so, though, we have no choice but to rise to the challenge and overcome the obstacles which we are bound to encounter, if only in the early stages. To this end, then, let us rely upon Muslim scholars for assistance and encouragement.

1. Texts and Rulings are Inseparable from their Objectives

As opposed to the Zahirites, or literalists, the majority of Muslim scholars affirm the principle that “texts and rulings are inseparable from their objectives.” However, within this majority, we find that individual scholars (as opposed to the schools of jurisprudence they adhere to) differ in the degree to which they affirm this principle and the consistency with which they apply it.

The need to understand texts and rulings in light of their overall objectives rather than basing one’s interpretation of them solely on their self-evident meanings, verbal content and outward formulations is based on the conclusion which was affirmed in our discussion of the practice of *ta‘lil*, namely, that the texts and rulings of Islamic Law may be understood in light of the higher objectives and human interests on behalf of which they were brought into existence. Consequently, it is essential that such objectives not be neglected when affirming judgments and investigating the meanings of texts.

In this connection – in addition to the examples already cited – we have a statement by Abū Zayd al-Dabbūsī (d. 432 AH/1040 AC), who writes,

The principle agreed upon among our scholars¹¹⁰ is that if zakah is due from a given individual, and if this individual distributes the zakah he owes in a form which fulfills what the relevant texts require of him, he will have fulfilled his obligation under Islamic Law. In his view,¹¹¹ however, this individual will not have fulfilled his legal obligation. Our

companions [in the Ḥanafite school] assert that if someone who owes zakah in dirhams chooses instead to distribute it in the form of wheat or something else, he will have fulfilled his legal obligation, since the objective of the relevant legal texts is to meet the needs of the poor, and by distributing one's zakah in the form of wheat or whatever else, this need has been met. According to Imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shāfi‘ī, however, this is not acceptable.¹¹²

This principle has been applied across the board to all types of financial obligations, such as the fast-breaking charity (*zakāt al-fitr*), atonements, vows, etc., such that different types of material wealth may be substituted for each other provided that there is equality among them and that the substitution causes no injustice to the recipient. Ibn al-Qayyim applies this principle to a number of cases which call for ijtihad. Concerning the fast-breaking charity which the Prophet specified as consisting of a *ṣā‘*¹¹³ of either dates, raisins or cottage cheese, Ibn al-Qayyim states, “These foods were the main staples in Madinah [at that time]. As for the inhabitants of places in which these are not the staple foods, however, they are required to donate a *ṣā‘* of whatever the staple food happens to be, since the objective of the fast-breaking charity is to meet the need of the unfortunate on the holiday.”¹¹⁴

Ibn al-Qayyim issues a similar judgment regarding the practice of *taṣriyah*,¹¹⁵ in connection with which the Prophet stipulated that if someone had purchased a she-goat, cow or she-camel with gorged udders, the buyer should give the original owner a *ṣā‘* of dates in return for what he had milked from the animal. Based on the literal content of this hadith, most Shafi‘ite and Ḥanbalite scholars have ruled that the compensation for the milk derived from such an animal must be a *ṣā‘* of dates and that nothing else can be substituted for this. “In so doing,” states Ibn al-Qayyim, “they are treating the Prophet’s ruling as *ta‘abbudī*, that is, one which admits of nothing but unquestioning obedience; moreover, they have specified a *ṣā‘* of dates as the only quantity acceptable as compensation in such a situation based on the literal content of the text. However, others have disagreed with them, saying: Rather, the buyer should repay the

animal's owner with a *ṣā'c* of whatever happens to be the staple food in the region where they live. This latter view, moreover, is the valid one.”¹¹⁶ He then adds,

There can be no doubt that this [latter] point of view most accurately reflects the higher objective of the Lawgiver and the best interests of those involved in such a transaction. The same principle, moreover, applies to the substances which the Lawgiver has specified for use in various situations and which may be substituted with other substances, some of which may be more suitable than the substance originally specified. An example of this is the Lawgiver's specification of the use of stones in the practice of *istijmār*¹¹⁷ even though it can easily be seen that toilet paper, cotton or wool would be more effective in achieving the same end and, therefore, more suited for this purpose. The same applies to the specification of soil as the agent with which one is to cleanse substances which have come in contact with a dog's saliva when, in fact, potash would achieve this purpose more effectively. All of this depends, of course, on our knowledge of the Lawgiver's intention behind such rulings; our aim is to achieve the Lawgiver's intention as fully as possible, either with the substance specified in the original ruling, or with another, more effective, one.¹¹⁸

The positions taken by Abū Zayd al-Dabbūsī and Ibn al-Qayyim bring us to the Malikite school's stance on whether it is permissible to distribute the value of one's zakah (rather than the particular substance prescribed in the rulings of the Law). As many will be aware, the Malikite school, like the Shafi'ite school, favors prohibiting the substitution of one substance for another, or the substitution of a substance with money of equal value. Rather, they only allow such substitution in cases in which it is absolutely necessary to do so. The judgments issued by Malikite jurisprudents on this matter range from undesirability to complete prohibition, and from ruling that this practice fulfills one's religious obligation to ruling that it does not.¹¹⁹ There are also varying points of view as to how this stance is to be explained. Is it because zakah is a form of worship whose bases one is not permitted to explore – that is, in relation to which *ta'�il* is

not acceptable?¹²⁰ Or is it, rather, based on the notion that if the person who owes the zakah pays the zakah's monetary value, this will be tantamount to purchasing the charity he intends to distribute,¹²¹ which is prohibited?

Whatever the case may be, such a hard-line position on this is inconsistent with the interest-based perspective and objectives-based ijtihad for which the Malikite school has been known! Imam Mālik was once asked for a ruling on a man who had paid zakah on his money before the prescribed time (that is, before it had been in his possession for an entire year), the question being: Should the man return the zakah he paid? And surprisingly, Mālik replied, "Yes, I believe that he should. Take, for example, someone who prays the noon prayer before noon, or someone who prays the dawn prayer before dawn. Are they not required to repeat it? And this man's situation is parallel to theirs."¹²² Ibn Rushd comments on this statement by Imam Mālik, saying,

It would appear that the payment of one's zakah shortly before the prescribed time would still be acceptable, since the requirement that money be in one's possession for an entire year before zakah is due on it involves some latitude. It is not like ritual prayer, the time period for which is limited and because of which, it is not permissible to perform it either before the time period has begun or after it has ended. If zakah were like prayer in this respect, it would be necessary for us to know at exactly what hour of the day one acquired the money in order to know at exactly which hour zakah will become due on it. However, this is unduly restrictive.¹²³

Ibn al-‘Arabī has a number of things to say on this point. He first explains the dispute in terms of whether one bases one's judgment on a consideration of zakah as *ta‘abbudī* in nature, or on a process of *ta‘līl*. He states,

For those who view zakah as a form of worship, it follows that it cannot be distributed early, since acts of worship may not be performed before their prescribed times. This position is taken by Mālik in al-‘Utbiyah,

where he states, “Have you not noted what the ruling would be if someone performed the noon prayer before noon?” And Ashhab¹²⁴ takes the same position. As for those who base their judgment on consideration for the fact that the objective of zakah is to meet the needs of the poor and to fulfill the human right [to material provision], it follows that it is permissible to distribute one’s zakah before the money on which the zakah is due has been in one’s possession for an entire year; this is the position taken by al-Shāfi‘ī and Abū Ḥanīfah. There is, in addition, a group of scholars who take a middle position. According to some of them, it is permissible to distribute one’s zakah up to two days before the prescribed time (this is stated in “the book of Muhammad”), while others hold that it is permissible to distribute it up to ten days early (this position is held by Ibn Ḥabib). Still others hold that one may distribute one’s zakah up to 15 days early, while according to Ibn al-Qāsim, it may be distributed as much as an entire month early, to which he adds, “[However,] the most valid point of view is to refrain from considering such early distribution as the norm, or even to approve it whatsoever.”¹²⁵

One gets the impression here that Ibn al-‘Arabī is somewhat annoyed by all these specifications, which neither stop at consideration of zakah as *ta‘abbudi* in nature and an acceptance of the Imam’s (Imam Mālik’s) stated position, nor open the door to greater lenience and consideration for human interests; in fact, they fail to agree on any one position. Be that as it may, my purpose in quoting this passage is to draw attention to the fact that virtually none of the scholars in question – with the exception of Ashhab – adheres to the position taken by Imam Mālik.

It is clear that Imam Mālik has relied on nothing here but an analogy which he draws between zakah and ritual prayer, the common element between them being that both of them are forms of worship. However, his thinking is subject to dispute, since he has based an analogy on a ruling which is *ta‘abbudi!*¹²⁶ If we refer back to Imam Mālik’s *al-Muwatṭa’*, we will find that it opens with a section entitled, *Wuqūt al-Ṣalāh* (The book of Prayer Times.) We also find that the angel Gabriel specified for the Apostle the beginning and ending

times for each of the prescribed ritual prayers. The Messenger of God then announced these times to the Muslim community, informing them of the commencement and conclusion of the time period for each of the five prayers and adding, “And between these two there is time [during which the prayer concerned may be performed].” The beginning and ending of the time period for each prayer have thus been defined with full precision, just as there are known passages in which believers are urged, sometimes through words of encouragement and enticement and at other times with words of threat and warning, to adhere to and preserve these limits. No such exhortations, however, are to be found in connection with zakah; and herein lies a significant distinction between zakah and ritual prayer.

Among the zakah-related issues in relation to which Imam Mālik grants consideration to the higher objectives of the Law and bases his rulings on *ta‘līl* (is the question of whether zakah is required of non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state). Concerning this he writes, “None of the *dhimmis* [non-Muslim subjects living in a Muslim country], including Zoroastrians, are required to pay zakah on their date palms, their grapevines and other produce, or their livestock, since zakah was imposed on Muslims in order to purify them and in response to [the needs of] their poor.”¹²⁷ Hence, Imam Mālik identifies two objectives of zakah, namely, the purification of the person who distributes it, and solidarity between those who distribute zakah and their needy brethren. He then concludes from this that non-Muslims are not included in either of these objectives, as a result of which no zakah is required of them. As for the jizyah, or poll tax, imposed on non-Muslims, it is their obligation to the state.

Another issue which may be examined in light of the higher objectives of the Law is the dispute over whether individuals referred to in the Qur'an as “those whose hearts are to be won over” (9:60) are still to receive a share of zakah funds, or whether this no longer applies. As in relation to other questions as well, we find that Mālik accommodates the *ahl al-ra'y*¹²⁸ and those who engage in *ta‘līl* by saying that this group's share in zakah no longer applies. This view is based on the interpretation of this share in terms of the interests of Islam and Muslims, and by affirming it, Imam Mālik appears to be

adhering to the ruling arrived at by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and others of the Companions. Be that as it may, it is founded upon an interest-based interpretation which goes beyond the superficial view of zakah as simply a form of worship which must not be subjected to *ta'�il*.

A number of other scholars, by contrast, adhere to the view that the right of "those whose hearts are to be won over" to a share in zakah funds is still valid, and that its discontinuation by 'Umar and other Companions of the Prophet was a circumstantially based interpretation of the manner in which zakah funds were to be disposed of. There is a consensus among Muslims that there has been no abrogation since the time of the Messenger of God; it follows from this, then, that 'Umar's ruling was, in actual fact, based on the circumstances in which he found himself. This perspective allows for the revival of the practice of setting aside a share of zakah funds for "those whose hearts are to be won over" whenever the need arises.

Al-Ṭabarī has a well-founded view of this matter based on the overall objectives of zakah. He holds, and rightly so, that zakah has two objectives, concerning which he states,

One of these objectives is to meet Muslims' material needs, while the other is to support and strengthen Islam. Whatever serves to support and strengthen Islam is for the sake of preserving the religion. This includes, for example, what is given to those engaged in jihad for God's sake; it is given to such individuals whether they are wealthy or poor, since its purpose is to enable them to wage war, and not to meet their material needs. Similarly with respect to "those whose hearts are to be won over," they are given a share of zakah funds even if they are wealthy, as a means of supporting Islam and promoting its well-being and strength. The Prophet gave to those in this group [even] after he had conquered a number of geographical areas, Islam had spread, and its adherents had grown powerful and respected. Hence, there is no basis on which anyone can object, saying, "There is no one today whose heart needs to be won over to Islam [by this means], since Muslims now, by virtue of their great numbers, are capable of defending themselves and ensuring the religion's survival without such measures," when the Prophet himself gave to those to whom he did under the circumstances described above.¹²⁹

Hence, the share of zakah funds due to “those whose hearts are to be won over” belongs to the same category as that due to those struggling in the way of God; as such, both are a form of jihad whose purpose is to support and strengthen Islam. This perspective is affirmed by al-Qurṭubī who, after listing various categories of “those whose hearts are to be won over,” says,

The purpose behind [distributing zakah among] all of these is to give to those whose Islam cannot truly take root except in this way. Hence, it is a type of jihad, since those who do not affirm the one God may be classified into three groups: those who can be won over by the presentation of evidence and proofs, those who can be won over by means of force, and those who can be won over through kindness and generosity. In relation to each of these groups, the insightful Muslim leader will employ the approach which he believes most likely to result in their salvation and their deliverance from unbelief.¹³⁰

Malikite scholars who affirm the continued practice of setting aside a share of zakah funds for “those whose hearts are to be won over,” holding that its validity depends on its intent and wise purpose, include the two judges ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Ibn al-‘Arabī.¹³¹ Ibn al-‘Arabī, after expressing his support for the continued distribution of this share whenever necessary, states, “Everything which the Prophet did, he did for a wise purpose, in response to a need, and for a reason. It follows, then, that if the reason or need for a given practice ceases to exist, the ruling calling for such a practice likewise ceases to apply; however, if the need recurs, the ruling comes to apply once again.”¹³²

In the same vein, it may be helpful here to examine a number of other instances in which Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī engages in ijtihad based on the principle that “texts and rulings are inseparable from their objectives.” He seeks, for example, to explain the Prophetic traditions which prohibit a woman from traveling a long distance without being escorted by a *mahram*.¹³³ After explaining the wise purpose behind this prohibition, that is, to protect the woman from any sort of insult to her dignity or violation of her honor, he continues,

Once this principle was established, scholars understood the basis for the prohibition, as a result of which some of them said that it would be permissible for a woman to travel in the company of a large number of trustworthy, virtuous men.

However, Abū Ḥanīfah objected to this ruling, saying, “Rather, the only acceptable travel companion for a woman is one of her unmarriageable male relatives.” As for me, I am amazed that he [Abū Ḥanīfah] would trace acts of worship to their logical bases, saying that the purpose behind the sanctity of worship is [to teach us] reverence and that the purpose behind the act of worship embodied in zakah is to meet the needs of the poor [as a result of which it is permissible to distribute the monetary value of what one owes in zakah (rather than distributing it in-kind)], after which he comes to this prohibition and, instead of interpreting it in terms of human interests and objectives, he claims that only an actual unmarriageable male relative may validly accompany a woman on a lengthy journey! This is truly amazing.¹³⁴

As further evidence in favor of permitting a woman to travel without a *mahram*, Ibn al-‘Arabī cites the Prophet’s auspicious declaration that there would come a day when the Muslims would enjoy such security that it would be possible for a woman to travel from Hīrah to Makkah with nothing to fear but God Almighty. Then, in confirmation that the aforementioned prohibition is to be understood in light of its wise purpose and objective, he states, “The goal in all of this is, as we have noted, the existence of security, in whatever sense this may be understood.”¹³⁵

In light of the foregoing, every individual can assess his own situation and preserve his religion and honor without discomfort or distress. Each believer (is capable of functioning as) a scholar of jurisprudence both for himself and his family. Hence, what this judge says is not a call to become lax in protecting people’s honor; rather, it is the embodiment of fairmindedness and of sound, moderate objectives-based jurisprudence.

2. Combining Universal Principles and Evidence Applicable to Particular Cases

By ‘universal principles,’ I mean both those universals enunciated explicitly in this or that text, and those derived through the inductive process. The first type of universals are those which are affirmed in the texts of the Qur’ān and the sound Prophetic hadiths; they include, for example, the words of the Qur’ān which read, “Behold, God bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice” (4:58); “Be true to your covenants” (5:1) and “whatever [wrong] any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another’s burden” (6:164). It also includes words of the Prophet such as, “The believer causes no harm either to himself or to others”; “Verily, God requires kindness of everything that exists”; “I have declared injustice unlawful for myself, just as I have declared it unlawful amongst you; therefore, be not unjust”; and, “Actions consist in the intentions behind them.” As for inductive universals, they are those which are arrived at by means of an inductive reading of a number of specific texts and rulings, such as the preservation of the essentials, exigencies and embellishments, as well as all of the general objectives of the Law and overarching principles of jurisprudence, such as, for example, the principle according to which “Necessity renders the forbidden permissible,” and “Hardship brings ease.”

By particular types of evidence (*al-adillah al-khaṣṣah*), I mean evidence which pertains to specific issues, such as a verse which conveys such-and-such a meaning, or a Prophetic hadith which serves as evidence in favor of such-and-such a ruling on such-and-such a question, or particular instances of analogical reasoning. When someone engaged in *ijtihad* is examining these types of particulars, he or she must bear in mind the universals of the Law, its overall objectives, and its overarching principles. In other words, one must recognize both levels at once, and one’s ruling must be based on both, that is, on evidence which is both universal and particular. This, then, is a type of objectives-based *ijtihad* and one approach thereto. Al-Shāṭibī

draws attention in a number of different places to this hermeneutical approach, which coordinates the universals of the Law with its particulars. Numerous references have been made to this approach thus far; however, the principle place in which al-Shāṭibī treats this theme is his discussion of Question 1 in his *Kitāb al-Adillah* (Book of Evidence).¹³⁶ Al-Shāṭibī opens his discussion of this question with the reminder that the entire Law is founded “on the intention to preserve the three levels of essentials, exigencies and embellishments...,” and that these universals “govern every particular beneath them...since there is no higher universal under which these three universals may be subsumed; rather, they themselves are the fundamentals of the Law.” He then continues, saying,

If this is the case, and if particulars – which are the fundamentals of the Law and whatever falls beneath them¹³⁷ – are derived from these universal principles (just as particulars are derived from their universals in other aspects of existence), then they should be considered together with these universals whenever particular types of evidence are being taken from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the consensus of the Muslim community, and *qiyās*. After all, it would be impossible for particulars to operate independently from their universals. Hence, whoever interprets a text concerning a particular matter, yet without lending attention to its universal, is in error.

He then continues, “Moreover, just as it is an error to adhere to the particular without reference to its universal, so also is it an error to adhere to the universal without reference to the particular... Rather, they must both be considered together in relation to every question.”

This is the true, most complete *ijtihad*, since every question which comes up for consideration must be examined in light of both particular and universal evidences, as well as the overall objectives of the Law. Hence, those who, in their practice of *ijtihad* and their issuing of legal decisions rely exclusively on their understanding of some particular type of evidence (a verse from the Qur'an, a Prophetic hadith, an analogy drawn between one ruling and another, etc.) are

engaged in a type of ijтиhad which is no less inadequate and flawed than those who have come to understand some aspect of the objectives of the Law in its preservation of essentials, exigencies and embellishments and its prevention of harm and corruption, after which they proceed to issue legal opinions and rulings without reference to the types of evidence particular to each question and case. Both of these groups – those who focus on the universal at the expense of the particular, and those who focus on the particular at the expense of the universal – fall short of the standard of the ideal ijтиhad. It follows, then, that consideration must be given to particulars together with their universals, and vice-versa. This is the perspective agreed upon by virtually all those who engage in (sound) ijтиhad, and the conclusion to which their independent reasoning leads them without fail.

Al-Shāfi‘ī concludes his discussion of the first question raised in the *Kitāb al-Adillah* (Book of Evidence) with the following cautions:

It is not acceptable to disregard such considerations, since the sum total of Islamic jurisprudence is contained therein, and it is due to the failure to lend them the proper attention that errors occur. Islamic jurisprudence is, in essence, an all-encompassing view of the higher objectives of the Lawgiver. We thus have the obligation to adhere to its texts – both those which pertain to particular circumstances and those which are universally applicable. When this approach is followed, it is valid to rule on legal questions in accordance with the principles of the Law, a process which yields perspectives which are reliable and accurate.

In his discussion of Question 2 in *Kitāb al-Adillah*¹³⁸ al-Shāfi‘ī affirms principles which serve to complement and detail what he has said about ijтиhad as a process which requires simultaneous consideration of universals and particulars. One such principle states that if speculative evidence is not based on definitive evidence, “it must be treated with caution, and one may not make an unqualified declaration of its validity.” In so saying, al-Shāfi‘ī is subjecting evidence which is particular and speculative in nature to the authority of evi-

dence which is universal and definitive in nature, foremost among which are the overall higher objectives of the Law.

This approach to ijтиhad is affirmed by a modern scholar as well, namely, Abd al-Hayy ibn al-Siddiq, who states,

There are two ways in which someone engaged in ijтиhad may arrive at an understanding of what the Lawgiver intends to communicate through a given text. One of these two ways is to look at the text's linguistic meaning in light of universal legislative principles, while giving these principles priority over particular evidence if it is not possible to combine them. The second way is to look to the higher objectives of the Law.¹³⁹

This approach to ijтиhad, numerous examples of which are cited by al-Shāfi‘ī in his discussion of Question 1 in his “Book of Evidence,” is firmly rooted in the jurisprudence of the Companions and the (four) imams, most particularly Imam Abū Ḥanīfah and Imam Mālik.

Concerning Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn ‘Abd al-Barr states, “Many hadith scholars have considered it permissible to challenge¹⁴⁰ Abū Ḥanīfah due to the fact that he rejected many reports passed down on the authority of reliable, trustworthy individuals. He would compare reports with agreed-upon hadiths and the meanings of the Qur’ān, and whatever proved inconsistent with these, he would reject and refer to as ‘irregular’ (*shādhdh*).”¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, this practice of Abū Ḥanīfah’s is an example of the examination of particular evidence in light of what is affirmed by universals. And if this practice is applicable to reports passed down within the Islamic heritage, it is all the more necessary that particular evidences and legal rulings be viewed in light of the universals of the Law and its overall higher objectives.

This approach to ijтиhad may be illustrated with reference to two other issues as well, namely, restriction of the freedom to act in accordance within one’s legal rights, and restrictions on the degree to which contracts are binding upon the parties to them. In speaking of rights here, I am referring to legitimate, established rights, and in

speaking of contracts, I am referring to valid agreements which fulfill the formal conditions prescribed by the Law. When considering a legal question and the evidence pertaining thereto, the individual engaging in ijтиhad – be he a judge or an individual in some other capacity – may find that the individual concerning whom the question was raised is fully within his established, legal rights and that he is entitled to conduct himself in accordance with these rights however he sees fit because, in so doing, he will be disposing of that which is lawfully his and within his domain. However, when such conduct is viewed in light of the higher objectives and overall principles of the Law, it may become apparent that it conflicts with them, at least in certain cases. Hence, in keeping with the practice of considering universals and particulars in tandem, it will be necessary in such a situation to restrict the degree to which the individual may act in accordance with his rights lest this result in a violation of universal principles and overall objectives.¹⁴²

Of relevance to this theme is what is termed in legal circles, “the prohibition against the arbitrary use of rights,” which is also a well-established principle in Islam and Islamic jurisprudence. Wahbah al-Zuhayli has listed the following five cases in which limitations on rights may be imposed:¹⁴³ (1) the intention to harm another, (2) seeking an illegitimate end, (3) resulting harm which is greater than the resulting benefit, (4) uncustomary use (of rights) with resulting harm to others, and (5) the use of rights negligently or incorrectly. What all five cases have in common is that a legitimate right is in conflict with the Lawgiver’s intention to eliminate harm, as a result of which there is no alternative but to seek a compromise between the two even if this requires the restriction or invalidation of the particular in favor of the universal.

As for the matter of placing restrictions on the degree to which contracts are binding upon the parties to them, it is based on the Lawgiver’s intention to establish justice and to abolish injustice in transactions among people in general, and in contracts in particular. If a contract includes provisions which entail a clear injustice to one of the parties thereto, then whoever is engaging in ijтиhad with respect to the contract in question must not disregard this fact on the

pretext that the contract fulfills the outward or formal requirements for validity. For if the Law recognized unjust contracts which otherwise meet the requirements for valid legal agreements, it would thereby validate contracts involving usury, the sale of unknown merchandise, and all other transactions involving purchase and sale with an element of risk or uncertainty.

The Lawgiver's intention to prevent injustice is fully established in its general application, and likewise as it applies to contracts. This being the case, contracts which are manifestly unjust constitute a blatant, serious violation of the objectives of the Law. It cannot be said that "contracts are the Law of those party to them" unless the contracts themselves conform to the Law of Islam, its limitations and its objectives; after all, the Law of God is above the law that governs those who are party to this or that contract, and if a contract contravenes the Law of Islam, it must be nullified or modified in such a way that it fulfills the requirements of justice for all.

Injustice in a contract may not be visible at first to those who are party to it, or at least, to the party who stands to be harmed by it; however, it may come to light later, as, for example, in the case of contracts involving *bay' al-gharar*, or the sale of merchandise which turns out to be damaged or flawed. In other cases the injustice may be apparent from the start, but one of the parties to it may be obliged to enter into the agreement for one reason or another. In still other situations, the contract may be fair in the beginning, after which circumstances change in such a way that if it continues to be adhered to as it is, it will be unfair or harmful to one of the parties. In all of these cases, what is required of the *mujtahid*, be he a judge or some other individual, is to examine the situation and arrive at a judgment which will achieve balance and fairness.

Among the texts which provide guidance in this connection are those which have to do with compensating the purchaser of land or crops for crop damage. According to a hadith passed down on the authority of Jābir "the Prophet provided compensation for damaged crops,"¹⁴⁴ and he "gave instructions that compensation should be provided for damaged crops."¹⁴⁵ Also on the authority of Jābir we have the report according to which the Messenger of God said, "If

you were to purchase some crops from your brother, after which they were damaged,¹⁴⁶ you would not have the right to demand any money from him.¹⁴⁷ On what basis would you take your brother's money unrightfully?"¹⁴⁸ My concern here is not to discuss the details of legal rulings pertaining to crop damage, nor those pertaining to any of the other types of contracts mentioned thus far. Rather, what concerns me is simply to set forth principles, and in this connection, I believe what I have presented thus far to be sufficient.

3. Achieving Benefit and Preventing Harm

Whenever and wherever an interest has been identified, efforts must be made to achieve and preserve it; similarly, wherever a source of harm has been determined to exist, efforts must be made to avert it and contain it even if it is not addressed by any specific legal text. In support of this statement, suffice it to note the general texts which urge the pursuit of righteousness, reform, benefit to others and goodness, as well as those which condemn corruption and prohibit evil and harm. Suffice it to note also the consensus among Muslim scholars that the most all-inclusive higher objective of the Law is to bring benefit and to prevent harm both in this world and the next.

This, in short, is the realm of unrestricted interests concerning which, despite the conflicting views which have been expressed concerning them by scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, have nevertheless been adopted by all recognized schools of jurisprudence. Moreover, the validity of unrestricted interests is the subject of unanimous agreement among modern *uṣūl* scholars,¹⁴⁹ as is their importance to Islamic jurisprudence. The detailed research on unrestricted interests by such scholars, much of which I have had occasion to refer to at various points throughout this work, is well-known and in wide circulation.

The validity of unrestricted interests has been affirmed by a number of Shafi'iite *uṣūl* scholars, who stipulate conditions for their application which have met with unanimous acceptance. The most important of these conditions is that they be consistent with the higher objectives of the Lawgiver; al-Ghazālī states in this connection, and

as we have quoted him as saying before, "...if we interpret 'interest' to mean the preservation of the Law's intent, then there is no basis for disagreement over whether it is to be heeded; on the contrary, it must be stated unequivocally to have an authoritative claim over us."¹⁵⁰ Similarly he states, "We sometimes treat human interests as a sign which points to a given ruling, while at other times we treat the ruling as a sign which points to particular human interests."¹⁵¹ In this context, what concerns us is the first part of this statement by al-Ghazālī, that is, his reference to the fact that human interests can serve as evidence in favor of a particular ruling. In further affirmation of this principle, he states elsewhere, "Every meaning which is appropriate to a ruling, which recurs in a variety of other legal rulings and which is not negated by a definitive, prior principle from the Qur'an, the Sunnah or the consensus of the Muslim community is to be affirmed even if it is not attested to by any specific text."¹⁵²

Nor does al-Shāṭibī go beyond this when he states, "Any legal principle which is not attested to by a specific text but which is in keeping with the actions of the Lawgiver and whose meaning is derived from the [cumulative] evidence found in the Law, is valid and may therefore be built upon and treated as authoritative if it has, by virtue of such accumulated evidence, become a matter of definitive certainty."¹⁵³ As examples of what he is saying, al-Shāṭibī cites the practices of *al-istidlāl al-mursal* (reasoning or argumentation based on unrestricted interests) and of *al-istihsān*, or juristic preference, both of which revolve around concern for human interests. Hence, concern for human interests – provided that these interests are genuine interests and in keeping with the higher objectives of the Lawgiver – is a principle characterized by definitive certainty which must, therefore, be employed as a guide in and basis for the issuance of legal rulings. Indeed, not even *qiyās*, or analogical deduction, is of greater importance in this process than are unrestricted interests. It was noted earlier that according to al-Juwaynī the preservation of essential interests is to be given priority over even an obvious analogy, while *istihsān* is simply the practice of giving human interests priority over *qiyās*. Al-Shāṭibī states, "Similarly, the established practice of *istihsān* is, in Mālik's view, based on this principle,

since its meaning consists in giving priority to *al-istidlāl al-mursal*, that is, reasoning based on unrestricted interests, over *qiyās*, or analogical deduction.”¹⁵⁴ In his *Kitāb al-Ijtihād* (Book of Ijtihad), al-Shātibī discusses the Malikite form of *istihsān*, saying that “what it requires is a return to assigning priority to *al-istidlāl al-mursal* over *qiyās*.¹⁵⁵ This process does not involve reliance on mere opinion or a personal decision to base legal rulings on unrestricted interests; rather, it is an application of the Law and its overall higher objectives. For, as al-Shātibī states,

Those who engage in *istihsān* do not rely simply on their own tastes and preferences. Rather, they rely upon what they know to be the Law-giver’s higher objective overall. *Istihsān* is called for, for example, when they are dealing with a question in relation to which the outcome of analogical deduction would require action that would lead to the forfeiture of some human interest or cause some form of harm or corruption...¹⁵⁶

Once a given human interest has been identified, and once it has been established that it is in keeping with the higher objectives of the Lawgiver, it makes no sense to stipulate that it not violate the outcome of analogical deduction as does al-Buti.¹⁵⁷ After all, a human interest of this nature is a principle in and of itself and an end in itself; on what basis, then, should it be subjected to particular instances of *qiyās* which are not only speculative in nature, but means rather than ends?!

It should be noted, in addition, that reliance on genuine human interests which are recognized by the Law is a type of universal analogical deduction, or *qiyās kullī*. Moreover, as we have seen, the universal is to be given priority over the particular if there is a conflict between the two. It is this universal *qiyās*, or let us say, aim-based *qiyās*, which is referred by Ibn Rushd the grandson as “unrestricted *qiyās*.” Ibn Rushd notes, for example, that a debtor who is claiming bankruptcy but whose bankruptcy and financial straits are not known is to be imprisoned until his bankruptcy has been demonstrated or until the creditor acknowledges it. He also mentions that

there is consensus on this ruling even though it is not mentioned in any authentic text of Islamic Law. Then he adds, “This, then, is evidence in favor of that type of analogical deduction which is required by human interests, and it is to this that we refer as ‘unrestricted analogical deduction.’”¹⁵⁸

This unrestricted *qiyās* does not rest on a specific, particular source text; rather, it “is required by human interests.” Hasan al-Turabi has called for an expansion of this type of *qiyās* – to which he refers as “broad *qiyās*” – saying,

It might also be helpful for us to expand our *qiyās* based on particulars to include all manner of texts, and to derive from them a specific aim of the religion or a specific human interest. Having done this, we seek to fulfill this aim wherever and whenever it is applicable to new circumstances and events. This is a type of jurisprudence which will enable us to emulate the jurisprudence of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb since it is a jurisprudence of broad, general interests whose aim is not to treat particular cases in such a way that they must conform in detail to a set model, or such that a case is evaluated based on an analogy which is drawn between it and a similar, previous case; rather, it seeks to reconstruct the overall directions and objectives of the Law from its earliest beginnings and, in light of this, to guide our present way of life.¹⁵⁹

Al-Turabi has also referred to this practice as ‘comprehensive *qiyās*’ and ‘the *qiyās* of unrestricted interests.’ Hence, we are brought back to the original name, the name which is well-known and prevalent among scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, namely, unrestricted interests. This multiplicity of designations serves to confirm the agreement which exists concerning the entity being designated and to clarify its content, that is, consideration for human interests and efforts to achieve and preserve them even if they are not named explicitly in specific texts of the Law.

An example of the interest-based fatwas issued by al-Shāṭibī is cited by al-Wansharīsī in his *al-Miyyār*, where he relates that al-Shāṭibī was once asked about a man who had been assigned to do all of the slaughtering and skinning for the butchers in the market, with

the stipulation that all of the butchers would be required to pay his wages. However, the butchers were unhappy with this arrangement and wanted to do their own slaughtering and skinning, both of which were tasks they performed with competence and skill. The question, then, was: Is it permissible for this man to undertake this work? And is he entitled to wages in this situation?

He [al-Shāṭibī] replied: “With regard to the man who has been assigned to undertake the slaughtering, he will have been assigned to this task either with a view to serving human interests, or for some other reason. In the former case, he will have been assigned to this job due to the fact that he observes the daily ritual prayers and the proper Islamic procedures for slaughter, as well as other, related, considerations. And if this is the case, there is no objection to his being authorized to perform this work; similarly, it is permissible for him to receive wages for his labor, since the general populace must accept that which is in their best interest, and if he were dismissed for the sake of all of the other butchers, the slaughtering would be left to those who neglect ritual prayer, get drunk, neglect to utter the *bismillah* when slaughtering, and the like. Such things have actually happened, so great is the corruption which reigns these days. If, on the other hand, he has been assigned to this task without a view to serving human interests¹⁶⁰ and despite the fact that someone else is more qualified for the job, then woe to the man who has thus been assigned, and particularly if he takes the wages by force. Such a person must repent of this trade and return what he has taken from the other butchers.”¹⁶¹

Not unlike the fatwa just cited is another ruling issued by al-Shāṭibī, likewise based on unrestricted interests, according to which it is permissible to impose a tax if the state treasury is unable to provide for the needs of the populace. A well-publicized disagreement arose over this issue between al-Shāṭibī and his shaykh, Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb, who held that such a measure is not permissible.¹⁶² In the context of discussing this question, al-Wansharīsī quotes a fatwa which was requested of the judge Abū ‘Umar ibn Manzūr.¹⁶³ A model fatwa which exemplifies a balanced, well-thought out, and

objectives-based perspective, the legal considerations upon which it is based are presented as follows:

The established principle of relevance here is that Muslims are not to be required to pay levies which are not required by Islamic Law; rather, they may only be required to render zakah and what is imposed by the Qur'an and the Sunnah, such as war booty which has been gained without fighting, *rikāz*¹⁶⁴, and the bequests of those who have bequeathed money to the state treasury. This is what makes it possible to bear the burdens of the homeland, to provide for its soldiers, to preserve Muslims' interests, and to defend and support Islam and the larger Muslim community. If the state treasury is unable to pay soldiers' salaries and to provide what it needs by way of arms and other war materiel, this lack may be distributed among the people. In this type of situation, some hold that a legal ruling calling for such a measure may be derived from the words of God Almighty: "They said: 'O thou Two-Horned One! Behold, Gog and Magog are spoiling this land. May we, then, pay unto thee a tribute on the understanding that thou wilt erect a barrier between us and them?'" (Qur'an, 18:94).

However, such a tax may only be levied under the following conditions: (1) There must be a genuine need. Hence, if there are sufficient funds in the state treasury for it to fulfill the aforementioned functions, it is not permitted to impose anything on the people in keeping with the words of the Prophet, "No poll tax shall be levied upon Muslims," and, "No one who has levied taxes will enter Paradise," which applies to the unjust imposition of duties or taxes. (2) The state must dispose of the proceeds justly; hence, it is unacceptable for the state treasury to keep the money for itself rather than distributing it among its Muslim subjects, nor may it spend the money wastefully, give it to those who do not truly deserve it, or give anyone more than he deserves. (3) The funds must be disbursed in accordance with existing needs, not with an aim to achieving some purpose of its own. (4) Taxes may only be levied on those who are able to pay them without suffering harm or injustice as a result. As for those who have little or nothing, no taxes may be required of them. (5) The state treasury must monitor its financial status at all

times, since there may come a time when it no longer needs to increase its available funds.¹⁶⁵

There is nothing which our jurisprudence, both past and present, needs more than this type of rightly guided, objectives-based assessment and this keen concern for the interests of Islam and Muslims. Such things require ample experience in discerning between what is beneficial and what is harmful, as well as a thorough understanding of the objectives of the Law. According to al-Shāṭibī, this is all that is required for the ability to assess and order human interests by means of independent reasoning. He states, “If ijtihad is employed in order to derive rulings from texts, knowledge of the Arabic language will be required. If, on the other hand, it is for the purpose of discerning sources of benefit and harm regardless of what particular texts have to say, or is based on some ruling which is accepted by all on the authority of a scholar who has already engaged in ijtihad based on particular texts, this does not require knowledge of the Arabic language. Rather, all it requires is a complete, detailed knowledge of the higher objectives of the Law.”¹⁶⁶

4. Consideration of Outcomes

Whenever someone engages in ijtihad, makes judgments and issues legal decisions, it is imperative that he assess the final outcomes of the actions concerning which he is ruling; in other words, he must have an appreciation of the consequences of his rulings and fatwas. In other words, a *mujtahid* must not consider his mission to be limited to that of “issuing a legal ruling.” Rather, his task is to rule on the action in question while bearing in mind the outcomes and consequences to which his ruling is likely to lead. Otherwise, it will mean either that he is not competent to engage in ijtihad, or that he is neglecting his duty in his capacity as *mujtahid*.

These considerations are an outgrowth of the principle that “rulings are inseparable from their objectives.” Hence, the *mujtahid* who has been appointed as a spokesperson for the Law must seek conscientiously and faithfully to ensure that rulings achieve their objectives

and that the obligations imposed on us by the Law lead to the best possible outcomes. Imam al-Shāṭibī establishes the foundation for this principle, saying, “Heeding the outcomes of actions is consistent with the higher objectives of the Law, whether the actions concerned are in accordance with the Law or in violation thereof. Therefore, the person engaging in *ijtihad* is not to judge a human action, be it one of commission or omission, until after he has given careful thought to the consequences to which the said action will lead.”¹⁶⁷

The Prophetic Sunnah contains a number of instructive applications of these truths. We find, for example, that the Prophet refrained from putting hypocrites to death despite his awareness of who they were and of the fact that they deserved to die, saying, “I fear that people will say that Muhammad kills his friends.”¹⁶⁸ Similarly, he abandoned the idea of rebuilding the Ka‘bah lest he stir up confusion among the Arabs, many of whom were new to Islam. In explanation of his concern, he said to ‘Ā’ishah, “Have you not noted the fact that when your people built the Ka‘bah, they disregarded the foundations laid by Abraham?” ‘O Messenger of God,’ she replied, ‘will you not then restore it to those foundations?’ ‘Were it not for the fact that your people were only recently delivered from unbelief,’ he replied, ‘I would do so.’¹⁶⁹ And when a certain Bedouin urinated in the mosque and the Companions rose to rebuke and prevent him, the Prophet said, “Do not prevent him. Leave him alone.”¹⁷⁰

Had it not been for the Prophet’s allowance for outcomes, he would have been duty bound to put the hypocrites to death, rebuild the Ka‘bah on the foundations laid by Abraham, and prevent the Bedouin Arab from completing his reprehensible act in the mosque. However, the first course of action would have caused people to repudiate Islam for fear that they might be killed on suspicion of being hypocrites. The second would have led the Arabs to believe that the Prophet was someone who razes holy sites and alters their features (for no good reason), while the third was bound to cause the person urinating to soil his body and clothing and may also have contaminated other areas of the mosque as well, not to mention posing potential danger to his health.

This concern for outcomes is similarly reflected in the decision

issued by Ibn ‘Abbās when he was approached by a man who asked him, “Is repentance possible for someone who has murdered a believer with premeditated intent?” “No, only hellfire” replied Ibn ‘Abbās. When the inquirer had departed, someone said to Ibn ‘Abbās, “So is this the kind of fatwa you give us?! You used to tell us that it is possible for someone who has committed murder to repent, and for his repentance to be accepted!” Ibn ‘Abbās replied, “I suspect that this is a disgruntled man who wants to murder a believer.” And when they investigated the situation, Ibn ‘Abbās’s suspicion was borne out.¹⁷¹

A woman once came to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mughaffal and asked him for his ruling on a woman who had conceived as a result of engaging in sexual misconduct and who, after giving birth, killed her son. Ibn Mughaffal replied, “What! Hers is the hellfire!” The woman departed in tears, whereupon he summoned her back and said, “I see that your situation is reflected in the words, ‘Yet he who does evil or [otherwise] sins against himself, and thereafter prays to God to forgive him, shall find God Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Grace’ (Qur’ān, 4:110).” The woman then dried her eyes and went on her way.¹⁷² Thus we see that after responding to the woman with a severe rebuke in order to deter her from further conduct of this sort and move her to repentance, Ibn Mughaffal saw from her condition that his response might drive her to despair of God’s mercy and that this, in turn, could lead her to suicide, to further sexual misconduct, or other unwanted outcomes. Hence, he modified his initial response to one more suited to her condition and circumstances.

Scholars have determined that in order for a fatwa to be sound, it must reflect an appreciation of time, place and persons. Moreover, consideration for outcomes, which is our concern in this discussion, requires all of these things as well: It requires a knowledge of conditions pertaining to times, places and people which will enable the *mufti* to engage in an accurate assessment of actions’ consequences and the effect which his fatwa will have upon them.

Also of relevance in this connection is what al-Shāṭibī refers to as *tahqīq al-manāt al-khaṣ* (determination of the particular basis).¹⁷³ The scholar’s determination of the basis for a ruling may be general,

as when he defines what is meant by a poor person who merits a share of the zakah funds, or what is meant by an adulterer who is *muḥṣan*,¹⁷⁴ or what is meant by reliability in relation to legal testimony and the narration of historical accounts. In other cases it will be specific; that is, it will relate to a particular person and depend on the scholar's knowledge of what is appropriate to such a person and which legal rulings would apply to him or her, as well as the extent of such appropriateness or application.

The process of ijtiḥad at this level of specificity requires a special type of individual. It is not sufficient for him or her to be a legal specialist with expertise in dealing with legal texts and their intricacies; rather, this process calls for someone with expertise in the realm of human psychology and the ability to read people's souls with their subtleties and peculiarities. Similarly, it calls for someone who is knowledgeable about social realities and influences. Al-Shāṭibī states,

The person undertaking this type of specific determination must be someone endowed with a divine light by means of which he knows people's souls and recognizes their aspirations, their disparate levels of understanding, their ability, or lack thereof, to tolerate the Law's requirements and bear its burdens, and the importance, or lack thereof, which they attach to earthly satisfactions. Such a scholar applies to each individual the rulings contained in the texts of the Law which are appropriate to him or her, knowing that this is the divine purpose for which the requirements of the Law have been conveyed to humankind.¹⁷⁵

Elsewhere al-Shāṭibī states, "The individual who has attained this rank may be described as lordly (*rabbānī*), wise (*hakīm*), firmly established in knowledge (*rāsikh fil-ilm*), knowing (*‘ālim*), and a man of understanding (*faqīh*) and discernment (*‘āqil*)."¹⁷⁶ Moreover, among the distinguishing features of the independent reasoning in which he engages is that he "looks to outcomes before making a reply to the question asked of him," whereas others reply to the question without regard for outcomes.¹⁷⁶

There is a relevant lesson for scholars in the words of the Prophet,

“When a ruler issues a ruling and, in the process, engages in ijтиhad, or independent reasoning, then if he is correct in his judgment he will merit two rewards, whereas if he is mistaken, he will merit one reward.”¹⁷⁷ What this hadith tells us is that whenever a ruler (or any scholar) issues a ruling, that is to say, whenever he prepares to do so, he must engage in independent reasoning. Moreover, the conclusion he reaches by means of his ijтиhad on one occasion will not exempt him from engaging in the process anew in relation to similar questions in the future since, no matter how great the similarities between one case and another, each one has its own distinguishing characteristics and peculiarities. As al-Qurṭubī expresses it, “This [hadith] attests to the correctness of *uṣūl* scholars’ assertion that the person who engages in ijтиhad must look anew at each case which emerges and not depend on the conclusions he reached based on a previous ijтиhad.”¹⁷⁸

Hence, determination of the specific basis for the ruling in question as it pertains to individuals, events, actions, times and places can help in making a proper assessment of outcomes on which to base one’s ijтиhad and resultant legal decision. In this manner, one will be all the more likely to achieve the outcomes which he intends to achieve, and to avoid those consequences which he aims to prevent.

CONCLUSION

Horizons for Further Research into *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*

I do not wish in this conclusion to adhere to the established custom of reviewing what has been presented in earlier discussions and stating in general terms what has already been stated in detail. For all of that is now past, its virtues and failings included, though I may well return to it at some point to complete it, correct its errors and straighten in it whatever is crooked.

The reason I speak in this manner is that, although I may feel on some superficial level – and, undoubtedly, only in passing – that I am in the process of completing this study, another, heavy feeling nevertheless weighs upon me, giving my mind no rest, namely, the feeling that I have completed nothing, and that everything I have unearthed or dealt with to one extent or another calls, in fact, for further research, study, clarification and confirmation.

This being the case, I will content myself in the following pages with pointers to some of the major issues requiring further investigation. I do so in acknowledgment of the fact that I have, truly, completed nothing, and particularly with respect to these major issues. As such, I do so in the hope that those with a love of knowledge will be inspired to fill the gaps in what has been written in the twin realms of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, thereby providing us with greater clarity concerning these matters of concern.

What follows, then, is a summary of the issues that preoccupy me:

1. How are the higher objectives of the Law to be ascertained? Or, in the words of Abd al-Majid al-Najjar, what are the approaches to revealing the higher objectives / intents of the Law? A great service was rendered in this area by the early scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* through their study of approaches to *ta‘līl*, after which al-Shāṭibī offered his own contribution to the discussion, including his practical experience in the inductive discovery of many of the Law’s higher objectives. Further additions were later made by Ibn ‘Āshūr. All of this, then, can facilitate the process of initiating studies which are more penetrating and precise, and which serve to further systematize and revise the work which has already been done on this vast subject. This, I believe, constitutes the proper academic entry point into a broadened discovery of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* from the most general to the most specific.
2. More inductive reading of the rulings of the Law and derivation of their bases (*‘ilal*) in order to expand the list of *maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* and to render them – or at least, as many of them as possible – the subject of agreement such that they can serve as authoritative reference points in our jurisprudence and ijtihad both now and in the future.
3. Rethinking of the matter of whether the ‘essentials’ of Islamic Law should be limited to the five recognized at present. These essentials have, rightly, acquired a special standing and authority. However, there are other vital interests whose importance the religion has affirmed and which may well be no less significant and inclusive than some of the five presently recognized essentials. Hence, we should not deprive such interests of a similar rank and recognition. It bears noting in this regard that Ahmad al-Khamlishi recently called for a decision to include justice and individual rights and freedoms among the essential higher objectives of the Law.¹ It should be borne in mind that, as we have seen, the existing list of essentials is based on ijtihad and that the idea of increasing their number has been

a valid possibility from times of old. It is not my desire to make any decisions which would be premature or out of place. However, I urge that this topic be opened up for discussion, subject to recognized standards of academic integrity and evidence which meets such standards.

4. Further detailed study of those things which serve as complements to the essentials, as well as the auxiliaries and embellishments, efforts to establish clear criteria for distinguishing among the various ranks and categories of human interests, as well as identification of the constants and variables of relevance to these distinctions.
5. An examination of the ways in which objectives-based thought has manifested itself in the writings of the major imams and scholars who have contributed visibly to concern for the higher objectives of the Law including the leading jurisprudents among the Companions of the Prophet, the four imams (al-Shāfi‘ī, Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfah and Ibn Ḥanbal), and others such as al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī and Imam al-Ṭabarī.
6. An overall study of attention to the higher objectives of the Law in Islamic jurisprudence: How does it manifest itself, and to what extent? Which objectives have scholars agreed over time to classify as objectives of the Law, and which objectives have been acknowledged by all from the beginning without dispute?
7. Lest this *maqāṣid*-based approach cause the process of ijtihad, and Islamic thought as a whole, to lose its clarity and definition, and lest, as a counter-reaction, there be a move to close the gate of ijtihad, as it were – or, at least, to retreat into a kind of fortress mentality involving reliance on texts’ superficial meanings and overly cautious readings of the Law, it is hoped that by means of the aforementioned types of research we can work to establish criteria for an “objectives-based ijtihad.” I have attempted, out of necessity, to highlight some features of objectives-

based ijtihad. However, features are one thing, and criteria are another. Hence, if it has been successful, let this attempt be a step forward along the path; otherwise, let it serve as an incentive to others to tackle and meet this challenge, in whole or in part.

Lastly, one might ask: Will expanding research on the higher objectives of the Law lead us to achieve what has been advocated by Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr, that is, the distillation of the higher objectives and definitive truths of the religion into a separate discipline known as “the science of the higher objectives of the Law”?² Or, as a number of modern scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* claim, are the higher objectives of the Law an inseparable part of the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* itself, that is, the fundamentals of jurisprudence?³

In point of fact, this question is of little importance so long as we are in agreement on the need for the major expansion being spoken of here and for the utmost care to be devoted to the higher objectives of the Law. Once this has been agreed on, it is of little concern whether or not we refer to it as a ‘science.’ Moreover, we may have been exempted from this question, at least for a time, by a statement made by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz, who holds that “the process of deriving legal rulings consists of two components. The first of these is the science of the Arabic language, while the second is the science of the hidden wisdom and higher objectives of Islamic Law.”⁴ It is these two sciences which go to make up the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. Hence, the higher objectives of the Law are both a science and a component of a science. What matters in the final analysis, of course, is the realities with which we deal and the objectives we seek to achieve, not the terms we apply to such realities or the means by which we seek to achieve such objectives.

May all praise be to God as befits His Majesty and the greatness of His Power; and may blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad and upon his descendants.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The presence of an asterisk after a given word or phrase in the text indicates that it will be found in the Glossary of Terms at the end of the book [translator's note].
- 2 One such book is al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.
- 3 For further detail on this topic, see our short article entitled, “*Ta'līl al-Aḥkām al-Shāriyah wa Mawqif al-Ḥanābilah Minhu*” (“The Ḥanbalites' Stance on *Ta'līl*, or the Practice of Tracing Islamic Legal Rulings Back to Their Causes”) *al-Buḥūth al-`Ilmiyah* Magazine, Riyadh.
- 4 *Hujjiyyat al-Sunnah*, First Printing, 1986, p.18.
- 5 Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence: Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, (London: IIIT, 2003), 3rd edn., p.68.
- 6 From the introduction to *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, by Muhammad Abu al-Ajfan, p.8. As for al-Shāṭibī's actual words on this topic, they will be quoted later in this book.
- 7 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.1, p.23.
- 8 See Qur'an 3:7, "He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental [of established meaning] (*muḥkamāt*); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical (*mutashābihāt*)" [translator's note].
- 9 (RAA) *Radiya Allahu 'Anhu*: May Allah be pleased with him. Said whenever a Companion of the Prophet is mentioned by name.
- 10 In other words, those who memorize the texts of the Qur'an are few and what they memorize is limited; however, by contrast with conditions which will apply in later times, there is a great deal of understanding of these texts and their meanings.
- 11 In other words, action is more important to them than whims and desires. Their actions take the lead, while their desires are subordinate, and this in contrast to the situation which will obtain among those who succeed them in later generations and for whom actions will be subordinate to whims and desires.
- 12 Narrated by Imam Mālik with a chain of transmission traceable to 'Abd Allāh

- Ibn Mas‘ūd. See *al-Muwatṭa'*, the section entitled *Jāmi‘ al-ṣalāh* (“A Compendium on Ritual Prayer”).
- ¹³ For a review of these methods and approaches, in addition to where they may be found in the most well-known books dealing with the principles of jurisprudence, see *al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.2, p.303 ff. and *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah* by Ibn ‘Āshūr, p.19. See also Abd al-Majid al-Najjar, “*Masālik lil-Kashf ‘an Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah bayn al-Shāti‘ī wa Ibn ‘Āshūr*”, in *al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyah* Magazine, Amir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’iriyyah University, and Yusuf al-Alim, *al-Maqāṣid al-‘Āmmah li al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah*.
- ¹⁴ (SAAS) – *Šallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.
- ¹⁵ *A‘lām al-Muwāqqi‘īn* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, vol.3, p.63.
- ¹⁶ *Alaysa al-Šubḥu bi Qarīb*, p.200.
- ¹⁷ *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah wa Makārimuhā*, p.161.
- ¹⁸ It must be said that this freedom from external influence is shared by the science of hadith literature, which is also a purely Islamic discipline. However, the science of hadith is limited in function and specialization, while its methods are included within those of jurisprudence and its fundamentals.
- ¹⁹ *Difā‘ ‘an al-Shari‘ah*, pp.69-71 and p.149.
- ²⁰ See *al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, p.10.
- ²¹ *Faṣl al-Maqāl fi mā bayna al-Shari‘ah wa al-Hikmah min al-Ittiṣāl*.
- ²² *Difā‘ ‘an al-Shari‘ah*, p.70.
- ²³ Ibid, p.71.

AUTHOR’S PREFACE

- 1 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.1, p.87.
- 2 *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah*, p.50.
- 3 Ibid., p.154.
- 4 *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah wa Makārimuhā*, p.3.
- 5 Ibid., pp.41-42.
- 6 Ibid., p.43.
- 7 Surprisingly, both Wahbah al-Zuhayli and Umar al-Jaydi have adopted, verbatim, the definitions provided by Ibn Ashur and Allal al-Fasi, yet without any indication that they have done so. Al-Zuhayli has formed a composite definition by combining the definitions provided by Ibn Ashur and al-Fasi, saying, “The higher objectives of Islamic Law are the Law’s meanings and objectives as manifested in most or all of its rulings; or, they may be said to be the purpose of the Law and the hidden wisdom which the Lawgiver has placed within each of its rulings.” As for al-Jaydi, he limits himself to al-Fasi’s

definition: “What is meant by ‘the higher objectives of Islamic Law’ is its purpose or goal, and the hidden wisdom which the Lawgiver has placed within each of its rulings.” See Zuhayli, *Adillat al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, vol.2, p.1017, and al-Jaydi, *al-Tashrīf al-Islāmī: Uṣūlūhu wa Maqāṣiduhu*, p.242.

- 8 *Tabṣirat al-Aḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aqdiyah wa Manāhij al-Aḥkām*, vol.1, p.8.
- 9 *Al-Mīyār*, vol.1, p.349.
- 10 *Fuṣūl al-Badāyi’ fī Uṣūl al-Sharāyi’*, vol.2, p.371, quoting Abd al-Aziz al-Rabiah, *al-Sabab ‘Ind al-Uṣūliyīn*, vol.2, p.22.
- 11 *Adillat al-Tashrīf al-Muta‘āriḍah wa Wujūh al-Tarjīh Baynahā*, pp.242-243.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 *Al-Sabab ‘Ind al-Uṣūliyīn*, vol.2, p.17.
- 14 Ibid., vol.2, p.18.
- 15 As well as a sense of psychological preparedness for worship.
- 16 The reason for sleep’s inclusion in a list of events which require a person to perform ablutions is the loss of consciousness and, therefore, control, which is associated with sleep. A person might, for example, pass gas while sleeping without being aware of it. Hence, as a precautionary ruling, Islamic Law requires that someone who has wakened from sleep perform ritual ablutions before engaging in prayer. [Translator’s note].
- 17 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.1, p.254.
- 18 *Ta‘līl al-Aḥkām*, p.13.
- 19 That is, for al-Shāṭibī.
- 20 That is, the alleviation of hardship, as we have seen.
- 21 In accordance with later terminology, travel is viewed as the ‘*illah*’, or basis for such allowances, while hardship [i.e., its alleviation] is viewed as their *hikmah*, or ‘wise purpose.’
- 22 Al-‘Irāqī holds that this is an agreed-upon hadith, while the author of *al-Taysīr* states that it is included in the five books of sound hadiths (comments by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.1, p.200).
- 23 In other words, prevention of this harmful outcome.
- 24 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.1, p.265.
- 25 See Chapter Three, Section One.
- 26 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.3, p.424.
- 27 Ibid., vol.2, p.385; see also vol.3, pp.144-154.
- 28 *Shifā’ al-Ghalil*, p.195.
- 29 *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, vol.10, p.113.
- 30 *Kashf al-Asrār ‘an Uṣūl al-Bazdawī*, vol.1, p.12.
- 31 Ibid. This argument is based on the fact that the word ‘*illah*’ is feminine, as

well as the fact that between the numbers 3 and 10 in Arabic, a feminine noun being counted would be preceded by the masculine form of the number.
[Translator's note].

- 32 *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, vol.8, p.101.
- 33 Jamil Saliba, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*, vol.2, pp.477-478.
- 34 Murad Wahbah, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*, p.447.
- 35 *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, vol.4, p.7.
- 36 *Al-Tanzīr al-Fiqhī*, p.9.

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Edited by Husni Nasr Zaydan.
- 2 Or, more literally, moistened, which is consistent with the analogy of the tree that al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī develops in this passage [translator's note].
- 3 *Al-Ṣalāh wa Maqāṣiduhā*, pp.9-10.
- 4 Ibid., p.12.
- 5 This is mentioned by Muḥammad ‘Ali al-Bajāwī in the introduction to his edition of al-Tirmidhī's book entitled, *al-Amthāl min al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*, pp.12-13. Al-Bajāwī asserts that the book is among a collection of al-Tirmidhī's writings and that there are two extant originals, one of which, in Moroccan script, is located in Paris's National Library, and the other of which is located in the ‘Āshir Afandī Library in Istanbul. Copies of both these originals are available at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah.
- 6 See the introduction to his edition of al-Tirmidhī's book entitled, *al-Manhiyāt*, p.13.
- 7 Quoted by al-Bajāwī in the aforementioned introduction, p.12.
- 8 Al-Bajāwī speaks of these as being a single book despite the clear distinction between their respective subject matters. Al-Subkī and others, by contrast, speak of them as two separate books.
- 9 Al-Subkī, *al-Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyah al-Kubrā*, vol.2, p.20.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 From his introduction to his edition of *al-Tawḥīd* by al-Māturīdī.
- 12 In his books *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah* and *Manshūr Walayat al-‘Ilm wal-Irādah*, vol.2, p.42.
- 13 His biography may be found in *Tartīb al-Madārik wa Taqrīb al-Masālik li Ma‘rifat A‘lām Madhhabi Mālik* by al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, vol.6, pp.183-192.
- 14 Ibid., vol.6, p.188.
- 15 Ibid., vol.6, p.185.

- ¹⁶ Ibid., vol.6, pp.187-188.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., vol.7, p.44.
- ¹⁸ This does not mean, of course, that the contact and mutual influence between the fields of theology and principles of jurisprudence only began in al-Bāqillānī's time. However, it appears to have begun to take place on a wider scale during this phase of history, as will be seen later in this study. What may be said for certain, moreover, is that al-Bāqillānī combined mastery and leadership in the realm of jurisprudence and its fundamentals (in the Malikite tradition) with equal mastery and leadership in the field of theology (in the Ash'arite tradition).
- ¹⁹ In his introduction to *al-Mankhūl*, p.8.
- ²⁰ Edited by Abd al-Hamid Abu Zunayd, its first part was published in 1413 AH/1993AC by Mu'assasat al-Risālah.
- ²¹ *Tartīb al-Madārik*, vo.7, pp.69-70.
- ²² Preface to *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyah*, p.249.
- ²³ *Al-Burhān*, the most important of al-Juwayni's books on the theme of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, was edited some years back by Abd al-Azim al-Dib and published in two volumes.
- ²⁴ This is stated forthrightly by al-Ghazālī himself at the conclusion of *al-Mankhūl*, where he says, "Herewith concludes this book...in which I have sought to avoid prolixity, contenting myself with what would suffice to quench the [reader's] thirst and restricting myself to the comments made by the Imam of the Two Sacred Shrines, may God have mercy on him, without amendment or addition..."
- ²⁵ As are illnesses.
- ²⁶ *Al-Burhān*, vol.2, p.913.
- ²⁷ For a discussion of the term *mubāḥ*, see Chapter Two, Section Three entitled, "Dimensions of the Theory."
- ²⁸ *Al-Burhān*, vol.10, p.295.
- ²⁹ Ibid., vol.2, pp.923-964.
- ³⁰ Ibid., vol.2, p.923.
- ³¹ Ibid., vol.2, p.923, p.927.
- ³² Ibid., vol.2, p.924, p.930.
- ³³ Ibid., vol.2, p.924, p.937.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p.925, p.947.
- ³⁵ Ibid., vol.2, p.947.
- ³⁶ Ibid., vol.2, p.926.
- ³⁷ Ibid.

- 38 Ibid., vol.2, p.958.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 *Al-Burhān*, vol.2, p.1151.
- 41 And over the Ḥanafite and Malikite schools in particular.
- 42 *Al-Burhān*, vol.2, p.1147.
- 43 *Shifa' al-Ghalil*, p.159.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 *Al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, p.286.
- 46 It would, in my view, be more correct to say, “from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or the consensus of the Muslim community,” and perhaps this is what the author means.
- 47 *Al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, pp.310-311.
- 48 Ibid., p.311.
- 49 *Shifa' al-Ghalil*, p.159.
- 50 Ibid., p.160.
- 51 Ibid., p.161.
- 52 Literally, “the denier of the truth who misleads others” [translator's note].
- 53 *Al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, p.287.
- 54 Literally, ‘the genitals’ [translator's note].
- 55 *Al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, p.287.
- 56 *Shifa' al-Ghalil*, p.162.
- 57 Ibid., p.164.
- 58 Ibid., vol.1, p.288. [It appears that al-Ghazālī is speaking only of specifically religious laws, since numerous positive laws which similarly aim to “reform humanity” lack prohibitions against disbelief, sexual conduct outside the bonds of marriage, and the drinking of intoxicants. Translator's note.]
- 59 *Shifa' al-Ghalil*, pp.161-172 and *al-Mustasfā*, vol.1, pp.286-293.
- 60 See al-Isnawī, *Nihāyat al-Sūl*, vol.1, p.4.
- 61 *Al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, section 2, pp.217-218.
- 62 Ibid., p.612.
- 63 *Al-Iḥkām*, vol.3, p.376.
- 64 Ibid., vol.3, p.394.
- 65 Ibid., vol.4, p.380.
- 66 Ibid., vol.4, p.377.
- 67 Ibid., vol.3, p.394.
- 68 We grant, of course, the existence of exceptions to this traditionalist chain. It was these exceptions, vibrant examples of which will be mentioned in due

course, which were crowned by the work of Imam al-Shāṭibī, the subject of this study.

- 69 A work by Ibn al-Subkī (d. 799 AH/1396 AC). [Translator's note].
- 70 *Muntahā al-Wuṣūl wa al-Amal fī Ḥilmay al-Uṣūl wa al-Jadal*, p.182.
- 71 Ibid., pp.227-228.
- 72 *Minhāj al-Wuṣūl ilā ʿIlm al-Uṣūl*, with his commentary, vol.4, p.75.
- 73 *Nihāyat al-Sūl fī Sharḥ Minhāj al-Uṣūl*, vol.4, pp.82-84.
- 74 Ibid., p.388.
- 75 Ibid., p.515.
- 76 *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, vol.2, pp.752-753.
- 77 *Musallam al-Thubūt* with its commentary, *Fawātiḥ al-Raḥmūt*, vol.2, p.262, with the reminder that al-Ghazālī uses the term *nasl* (progeny, offspring) rather than *nasab*.
- 78 Ibid., p.326.
- 79 *Ḍawābiṭ al-Maslahah*, p.250.
- 80 *Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘ bi Ḥāshiyat al-Banānī*, vol.2, p.280.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 *Sharḥ Tanqīḥ al-Fuṣūl*, p.391.
- 83 *Irshād al-Fuṣūl*, p.216.
- 84 *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah*, pp.81-82.
- 85 The works I reviewed include: *Al-Fuṣūl fil-Uṣūl* by Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH/980 AC); *Ta’sīs al-Naẓar* by Abū Zayd al-Dabbūsī (d. 432 AH/1040 AC); *Uṣūl al-Bazdawī*, Fakhr al-Islām (d. 482 AH/1089 AC) and its commentary, *Kashf al-Asrār* by Abd al-Aziz al-Bukhari (d. 730 AH/1329 AC); *Uṣūl al-Sarkhasī* (d. 490 AH/1096 AC); and *al-Tawḍīḥ fī ḥall Ghawāmid al-Tanqīḥ* by Ṣadr al-Shari‘ah (d. 747 AH/1249 AC), who was influenced by al-Bazdawī's thought. As for those who came later than al-Shāṭibī, there is no need to mention them in this context.
- 86 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.295.
- 87 *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyah*, vol.5, p.103.
- 88 *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol.14, p.260.
- 89 Ibid., p.259.
- 90 *Qawāṣid al-Abkām*, vol.1, p.8.
- 91 Ibid., vol.1, p.11.
- 92 Ibid., vol.2, p.73.
- 93 Ibid., vol.2, p.72.
- 94 Ibid., vol.2, p.72.

- 95 Ibid., vol.2, p.143ff.
- 96 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, p.48.
- 97 Recorded in *Şahīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Şahīḥ Muslim*.
- 98 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.28, p.248.
- 99 The term *hisbah* refers to a position in the Islamic state which used to be held by an official who was responsible for overseeing public affairs, including such duties as price regulation, monitoring people's adherence to rules of etiquette, and the like. [Translator's note; see *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ* (Istanbul: Al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyyah, 1960)].
- 100 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.28, p.61.
- 101 Ibid., vol.28, p.262.
- 102 Ibid., vol.28, p.263.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid., vol.28, p.260.
- 105 Ibid., vol.32, p.234.
- 106 The learned scholar Ibn Farhūn al-Mālikī (d. 799 AH/1396AC) has made statements which are more or less consistent with what Ibn Taymiyah is saying here. Ibn Farhūn divides the objectives of Islamic law into five categories, of which the five 'essentials' represent only one (*Tabṣirat al-Aḥkām*, vol.2, p.105). Moreover, despite the fact that Ibn Farhūn's statements – like those of Ibn Taymiyah and perhaps even more so – lack clarity and precision, they nevertheless encourage us to consider a revision of the prevailing limitation placed on the number of the Law's fundamental objectives.
- 107 *Tartīb al-Madārik*, vol.1, p.77.
- 108 In an afterword to *al-Muwatṭa'* in the Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī edition, from which all quotations are taken in this section.
- 109 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, pp.312-313.
- 110 *Naqd Maqāl fī Masā'il min 'Ilm al-Hadīth wa al-Fiqh wa Uṣūlīhi wa Tafḍīl Ba'd al-Madhāhib*, p.85.
- 111 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, pp.294-396.
- 112 Ibid., p.294.
- 113 Ibid., p.328.
- 114 Ibid., p.320.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 *Al-Mankhūl*, p.353.
- 117 Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, p.346.
- 118 *Al-Kāfi fī Fiqh Ahl al-Madīnah*, vol.2, p.735.
- 119 An *ardeb* (pl., *arādib*) is a large measure said to equal 25 [ṣā‘s] [the editor, Abu al-Ajfan].

¹²⁰ *Fatawā al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī*, p.159.

¹²¹ Ibid., pp.156-160.

¹²² *Al-Itiṣām*, vol.2, p.133.

¹²³ *Tartīb al-Madārik*, vol.1, p.92.

¹²⁴ *Madkhal ilā Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Mālikī*, p.93.

¹²⁵ Imam al-Shāfi‘ī’s hesitation to adopt the principle of human interests may be perceived through a reading of many Shāfi‘īte writings on *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Imam al-Ghazālī states this explicitly in *al-Mankhūl* (p. 354): “Mālik, may God be pleased with him, spoke at great length on the subject of human interests. As for al-Shāfi‘ī, may God be pleased with him, he had two approaches in this connection: The first of these consisted in an adherence to the principle according to which analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) must be based on a similarity between the case at hand and an earlier case considered to be a precedent for it; this first approach entailed a rejection of all evidence based on unrestricted interests. In the second approach, however, he acknowledged the validity of evidence based on unrestricted interests; in so doing, he came closer to Mālik’s position despite disagreements with him on particular questions.” Al-Ghazālī confirms this also in *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl* (p.188) where he writes, “The Malikite school supports consideration for unrestricted interests, whereas al-Shāfi‘ī expressed reservations on this matter.”

¹²⁶ *Al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī al-Āmm*, vol.1, p.114.

¹²⁷ Malikite sources mention unequivocally that Abū Ḥanīfah was among those who transmitted statements on the authority of Imam Mālik (see *al-Intiqā’* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, p.12 and *Tartīb al-Madārik* by al-Qādī ‘Iyād, vol.2, p.174), whereas Ḥanafite sources simply mention Mālik’s testimony to Abū Ḥanīfah’s keen intelligence (see *Naṣb al-Rāyah* by al-Zayla‘ī, vol.1, p.37 and *al-Mabsūt* by al-Sarkhasī, vol.12, p.28). Zāhid al-Kawtharī has attempted to cast doubt on the soundness of two hadiths originating with Abū Ḥanīfah on the authority of Imam Mālik. Similarly, Ibn Hajar has been quoted as saying that Abū Ḥanīfah’s accounts on Mālik’s authority are not reliable (on the margin of *al-Intiqā’*, pp.12-14). Be that as it may, all of the aforementioned sources, among others, are in agreement that the two men did meet during their lifetimes.

¹²⁸ The text reads “Imam al-Shāfi‘ī”; however, the context indicates that it should read “Imam Mālik,” since it was Mālik and the Malikite school who were associated with “the technical formulation of unrestricted interests...”. [Translator’s note].

¹²⁹ The attribution of this statement to Imam Mālik is common in Malikite writings, and al-Shāfi‘ī mentions it repeatedly. It is likewise mentioned by Ibn

Ḥazm with an unbroken chain of transmission leading back to Mālik; Ibn Ḥazm states, “al-‘Utbī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad relates that Aṣbagh ibn al-Faraj said, ‘I heard Ibn al-Qāsim say, ‘Mālik said, ‘Nine-tenths of knowledge is *istiḥsān*.’’’” Aṣbagh ibn al-Faraj [also] states in the section entitled, ‘Mothers of Sons’ of the book *al-Mustakhrāj*, ‘*Istiḥsān* carries greater weight in knowledge than analogical induction’ (*al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, vol.6, p.16).

¹³⁰ *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid*, vol.2, p.154.

¹³¹ *Al-Kāfi fī Fiqh Ahl al-Madīnah*, vol.2, p.938.

¹³² *Al-Madkhāl lil-Tashrī’ al-Islāmī*, p.255.

¹³³ *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, vol.2, p.747.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.751.

¹³⁵ *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, by al-Qāfi Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī, vol.1, p.96.

¹³⁶ *Al-Jāmi’ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol.9, p.64.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.12, p.214.

¹³⁸ ‘Āridat al-Aḥwadhi bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhi’, vol.1, p.39.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.69.

¹⁴⁰ *A‘lām al-Muwaqqī‘īn*, vol.3, pp.135-159.

¹⁴¹ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, p.349.

¹⁴² *A‘lām al-Muwaqqī‘īn*, vol.3, p.142.

¹⁴³ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol.4, p.198.

¹⁴⁴ *Sadd al-Dharā’i’ fil-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah*, p.615.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Āridat al-Aḥwadhi’, vol.5, p.201.

¹⁴⁶ *Al-Muwattā’*, vol.2, p.573.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Wansharīsī, *al-Mī‘yār*, vol.2, pp.199-200, from a fatwa issued by Abū Sa‘īd ibn Lubb, Mufti of Granada and the city’s leading shaykh during his era (d. 782 AH/1381 AC).

¹⁴⁸ *Al-Mī‘yār*, vol.3, pp.195-196.

¹⁴⁹ *Nawāzil al-‘Alamī*, vol.2, p.92.

¹⁵⁰ In connection with such preventative rulings based on independent interpretations, I myself would prefer the use of the term “prevention” (*man’*) rather than the term which is used here, namely, “prohibition” (*tahrim*).

¹⁵¹ *Al-Mī‘yār*, vol.12, p.25.

¹⁵² *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, p.345.

¹⁵³ Summarized from Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, vol.4, pp.100-101

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.100.

- 155 *Al-Mīyār*, vol.6, p.71.
- 156 *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol.3, p.1500.
- 157 Ibid., vol.1, p.334.
- 158 *Al-Mīyār*, vol.2, pp.65-66.
- 159 Ibid., vol.2, p.66.
- 160 Ibid., vol.2, p.100, from a decision issued by Abū Sa’id Ibn Lubb.
- 161 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol.20, pp.377-378.
- 162 *Al-Muwaṭṭa’*, vol.2, pp.829-830, from the section on the prescribed punishments for *qadhf*, *nafy* and *ta’rīd*.
- 163 Edited by al-Dardabi, this work is an unpublished doctoral dissertation, a copy of which is available at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasaniyah in Rabat.
- 164 “*Uṣūl al-Madhab al-Mālikī: al-Ijmā‘, ‘Amal Ahl al-Madīnah*,” *Majallat al-Fiqh al-Mālikī wa al-Turāth al-Qadā’i bil-Maghrib*, Nos. 5-6.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 This prefatory introduction will not broach the subject of the objectives of Islamic Law as presented by al-Shāṭibī, since this will be the theme of later chapters.
- 2 *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, pp.22-23.
- 3 Ahmād al-Tunbuktī al-Sūdānī, *Nayl al-Ibtihāj bi Tatrīz al-Dibāj*, p.46.
- 4 *Shajarat al-Nūr al-Zakīyah fī Tabaqāt al-Mālikiyah*, p.231.
- 5 *Al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tarīkh al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 4:248.
- 6 *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.32.
- 7 That is, Sativa, located to the southwest of Valencia, near the Mediterranean Sea. Sativa was a thriving, prosperous city whence hailed a number of ‘Shatibite’ ('Sativite') scholars, of whom al-Shāṭibī was the most renowned.
- 8 The most notable of these places are Tilimsan and Fez.
- 9 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.47.
- 10 *Barnāmij al-Majārī*, p.119 (from Abu al-Ajfan’s introduction to *al-Fatāwā*, p.34).
- 11 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.47.
- 12 Edited by Muhammad al-Dardabi as his doctoral dissertation, and located at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasaniyah in Rabat.
- 13 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.47.
- 14 *Al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*, p.163.
- 15 Ibid., p.169.
- 16 Ibid., p.23.
- 17 *Al-Mīyār*, 6:572.
- 18 Ibid., 7:317.

- ¹⁹ *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.37.
- ²⁰ *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.49.
- ²¹ For his biography and an account of his martyrdom, see *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.285.
- ²² *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.285ff.
- ²³ *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.41.
- ²⁴ I do not know why certain modern scholars go to the trouble of adding to books' titles. Darrāz's edition, for example, is entitled *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Shari'ah*, while Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's edition is entitled, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Āḥkām*, as is the one which was published under the supervision of Muḥammad al-Khaḍir al-Tūnisī and Ḥusayn Makhlūf, and this despite the fact that such additions to the title are mentioned neither by the book's author nor by ancient sources.
- ²⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:24.
- ²⁶ In the book's published form, Parts One and Two are incorporated into a single part; hence, Part Three dealing with the higher objectives of the Law becomes Part Two, and so on.
- ²⁷ Al-Shāṭibī limits himself in his treatment of legal evidence to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. After "Section 1: Concerning Evidence on a General Level," he moves on to, "Section 2: Concerning Evidence on the Specific Level, namely, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Consensus and Opinion," where he states, "given that the Qur'an and the Sunnah are the foundation for all other categories of evidence, we have limited our discussion to them only" (*al-Muwāfaqāt*, p.3, p.345). However, al-Shāṭibī declares in Part One that he will deal with the subject of *qiyās*, or analogical induction. Thus, in the context of discussing the relationship between human reason and the text, he states, "...this will be explained in the proper context in the section on analogical induction (*qiyās*)" (*al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:89). He expresses the same intention in Part Two, saying, "...this will be referred to in the section on analogical induction, God willing" (2:392).
- ²⁸ See *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.47. Abu al-Ajfan has ascertained that this rhymed version is still extant and available at the Escorial Monastery Library in Spain, No. 1164.
- ²⁹ *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.48.
- ³⁰ *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:111-150.
- ³¹ The title of this book is given incorrectly as *al-Ishārāt wa al-Ifādāt* in *Nafh al-Ṭib*, edited by Ihsan Abbas, 7:279.
- ³² Al-Tunbukti's testimony suggests the contrary, however.
- ³³ *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.49.
- ³⁴ *Al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*, p.28.

- 35 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.48.
- 36 Ibid., p.49.
- 37 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:90.
- 38 Ibid., 1:219.
- 39 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.49.
- 40 *Al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*, p.107.
- 41 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:24-25.
- 42 *Al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*, p.101.
- 43 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:23.
- 44 Ibid., 1:26.
- 45 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:30-31.
- 46 Ibid., 1:34.
- 47 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.49.
- 48 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:25-35.
- 49 Ibid., 1:27.
- 50 Ibid., 1:28.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 This is a truth which has been attested to by numerous scholars and writers, among them Muhammad Rashid Rida, who said, among other things, “Never among all those who have written on the subject of religious innovations in Islam, have we seen anyone who has engaged in the kind of scholarly, principles-based research on the subject undertaken by Abū Ishaq al-Shāṭibī” (*al-Itiṣām*, 1:4).
- 53 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:353-354.
- 54 Ibid., 1:354-2:6.
- 55 *Al-Mīyār*, 6:370.
- 56 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:41. Al-Shāṭibī quotes this statement once again and refutes it at the beginning of Part Two, and likewise without naming the person who uttered it. This same statement is quoted by al-Wansharīsī in *al-Mīyār*, 6:370, where he attributes it to Abū Sa‘id Ibn Lubb, al-Shāṭibī’s shaykh, friend and opponent.
- 57 See those compiled by Abu al-Ajfan in *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, pp.189-214.
- 58 The inquirer is Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Haffār, to whom al-Wansharīsī refers as a renowned scholar and one of the most illustrious shaykhs (*al-Mīyār*, 7:108).
- 59 *Al-Mīyār*, 7:111.
- 60 Ibid., 11:139.
- 61 Ibid., 11:140.
- 62 The word which appears in the text is *akthar* ('more') rather than *athar* ('effect'); however, I believe the latter to be correct.

- 63 *Al-Mīyār*, 11:141.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.48.
- 67 This book's full title is *al-Mīyār al-Mūrib wa al-Jāmi' al-Mughrib 'an Fatāwā Ahl Ifriqiyah wa al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, prepared for publication by a group of jurisprudents under the supervision of Muhammad Hijji.
- 68 *Al-Mīyār*, 6:364.
- 69 The latter possibility is the more likely one, especially given the fact that the book in its aforementioned printing is replete with glaring errors of every sort, some of which have already been noted and others of which will be noted in what follows.
- 70 An example of the type of egregious error to which I referred in the note above may be seen in the sentence with which Ibn 'Arafah's replies begin, as it is filled with ungrammaticalities and yields no discernible meaning.
- 71 *Sharḥ Hudūd Ibn 'Arafah*, p.242.
- 72 This is based on the view that the principle of 'consideration for opposing viewpoints' applies to actions which have already been committed or rulings which have already been issued. This is the prevailing view and the one supported by most applied branches of this principle. However, there are scholars who hold that 'consideration for opposing viewpoints' in the Malikite school may apply both subsequent to and prior to such events if the evidence in favor of the opposing viewpoint is powerful. Be that as it may, the issue calls for an extensive, thorough study which goes beyond the purview of this book.
- 73 If one compares the content of this question and the one following it, including Abū Sa'id Ibn Lubb's response, to what was said in the section above entitled "Al-Shāṭibi's Ordeal" concerning the way in which he handled the position of prayer leader and public orator and his avoidance of practices associated with these positions which he considered to be 'innovations,' as well as his having been accused of being a Rafidite, etc., it will become clear that the imam mentioned in this question and the question subsequent to it was al-Shāṭibi himself.
- 74 *Al-Mīyār*, 6:364-373.
- 75 Ibid., 6:373-385.
- 76 Ibid., 6:385.
- 77 Note the anonymity of the questioner!
- 78 *Al-Mīyār*, 6:387. Note his statement that this issue is the one which had been posed previously, that is, in the aforementioned eight questions.
- 79 Ibid., 6:387. These same phrases are found in Question 4 of the eight ques-

- tions summarized earlier. Compare with *al-Mī'yār*, 6:367.
- 80 Ibid., 6:387.
- 81 He limits himself to the mention of this particular question in his correspondence, since its mention comes within the context of his treatment of this topic, namely, ‘consideration for opposing points of view.’
- 82 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:151.
- 83 *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:146.
- 84 It appears from his phrasing and other related evidence that what he refers to as the “more plausible” response was al-Qabbāb’s, while the one he describes as being “less so” was Ibn ‘Arafah’s.
- 85 *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:146.
- 86 By way of reminder, it should be mentioned that in the quote above from al-Tumbuktī, he names, in addition to Ibn ‘Arafah and al-Qabbāb, both al-Qādī al-Qashtālī and “the great saint Ibn ‘Abbād.” His correspondence with Ibn ‘Abbād will be mentioned later in this section; as for his correspondence with al-Qādī al-Qashtālī, I have not come across any of it unless it happens to be the correspondence which is referred to in al-Shāṭibī’s reply to al-Qabbāb concerning the issue of ‘consideration for opposing points of view,’ where he states that, “al-Qādī Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qashtālī has attempted to respond to the difficulty from another perspective, saying...” (*al-Mī'yār*, 6:391).
- 87 The Arabic phrase which is rendered here as ‘substantial’ appears in this quotation as *muqtadā bīhi*, whereas it ought to read *mu'tadd bīhi* or *yū'taddu bīhi* as it appears in the quotation below from *al-Muwāfaqāt*.
- 88 *Al-Mī'yār*, 6:368-369.
- 89 For example, disagreements or disputes.
- 90 Note the comparison between the present quotation and the earlier one from *al-Mī'yār*.
- 91 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:103-104.
- 92 Ibid., 1:104; for the full text of what he wrote, see also, pp.104-106.
- 93 By ‘they,’ he is referring to al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd and al-Qarāfī, who held the view which is the subject of dispute here; it is likewise they who are mentioned in the question.
- 94 The Arabic text here is missing the negative particle *lā* needed to complete the sentence’s meaning.
- 95 That is, the questioner.
- 96 *Al-Mī'yār*, 6:381. With regard to the [identity of the] person who posed these eight questions, one might also compare Question 5 with the topic treated by al-Shāṭibī in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:296.
- 97 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.262.
- 98 *Al-Mī'yār*, 1:283.

- 99 Ibid.
- 100 See *al-Itiṣām*, 1:352–353.
- 101 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:353. Note, moreover, that he does not name the *shuyūk* in question!
- 102 This statement reveals the question's actual subject, namely, communal supplication initiated by the imam on an ongoing basis following the communal prayer.
- 103 *Al-Itiṣām*, 1:353. The context of this quotation is an introduction to a discussion of the position taken by Abū Sa‘īd Ibn Lubb in his furious response to 'the imam' who had abandoned the practice of communal supplication.
- 104 *Al-Mīyār*, 11:117.
- 105 Ibid., 11:117–118.
- 106 Ibid., 11:119.
- 107 Ibid., 11:120.
- 108 One assumes that he must mean 50,000 dirhams or the like, the meaning being that one must renounce whatever distracts one from prayer no matter how valuable it happens to be [translator's note].
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid., 11:123.
- 111 It appears that while in Fez, al-Wansharīsī was able to obtain only the response written by al-Qabbāb, himself from Fez; as we have seen, however, the response does not contain the inquirer's name.
- 112 He does not name him here, either.
- 113 Note that the word 'God-fearing' (Arabic, *al-muttaqūn*) at the end of the statement as quoted by al-Shāṭibī appears as 'our forebears' (*al-mutaqad - dimūn*) in *al-Mīyār*, perhaps as a result of scribal error.
- 114 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:102.
- 115 Ibid., 1:103.
- 116 It is also reminiscent of his reply to al-Qushayrī (who was a Sufi) concerning the requirement that a follower of the Sufi path give up his wealth. See *al-Itiṣām*, 1:214–215.
- 117 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:103.
- 118 Ibid., 1:102.
- 119 Ibid., 1:106.
- 120 *Al-Mīyār*, 12:293.
- 121 It appears that al-Wansharīsī gleaned the inquirer's name from Ibn ‘Abbād's response which, unlike al-Qabbāb's, reads, "From Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbād ... to Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Shāṭibī ..." (*al-Mīyār*, 12:293).
- 122 *Al-Mīyār*, 12:293.
- 123 Ibid., 1:123; a similar quote appears earlier in this chapter.

- ¹²⁴ Given the central importance of this issue in any discussion of the objectives of Islamic Law, and in view of the fact that al-Shāṭibī treats it with such brevity, I will discuss it more fully in Chapter Three, Section One.
- ¹²⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:5.
- ¹²⁶ I have listed these five in the same order in which al-Shāṭibī lists them the first time he mentions them (1:38). For a detailed discussion of this topic, see the section below; see also the latter part of Section One, Chapter One.
- ¹²⁷ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:13.
- ¹²⁸ That is, a complete imbalance as a result of which the entity in question will cease to exist, as opposed to a partial imbalance.
- ¹²⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:21-22.
- ¹³⁰ The first question.
- ¹³¹ The second question.
- ¹³² This clarification was written in the margin by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz (2:69).
- ¹³³ *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:293.
- ¹³⁴ At the conclusion to Question 4.
- ¹³⁵ At the beginning of Question 6.
- ¹³⁶ That is, the two extremes of lenience and severity.
- ¹³⁷ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:168.
- ¹³⁸ It would have been fitting for him to illustrate this concept with the verse which reads, “Alluring unto man is the enjoyment of worldly desire through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and horses of high mark, and cattle, and lands. All this may be enjoyed in the life of this world – but the most beauteous of all goals is with God” (Qur'an, 3:14), as well as less detailed verses, such as God Almighty's words, “Say: ‘Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?’ Say: ‘They are [lawful] in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith – to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day.’” (7:32)
- ¹³⁹ For these reasons in detail and the evidence upon which they are based, see Question 5 and the discussions based thereon. As for the summary presented here, it is based on al-Shāṭibī's own words with only slight paraphrasing on my part.
- ¹⁴⁰ In other words, if an action is performed for the sake of primary objectives, it is among the pillars of the religion and the greatest acts of obedience.
- ¹⁴¹ In part because the discussion is so precise and detailed that it does not allow of any meaningful summarization, and in part because I want this synopsis to serve as a preface to al-Shāṭibī's theory in its most fundamental aspects, which requires that I not bog the reader down in complex side issues.
- ¹⁴² By this al-Shāṭibī is referring to motivations which have nothing to do with

- wanting to impress others but are, rather, relevant only to the individual concerned, as when someone who, in addition to his intention to worship God through his actions, has the intention of dieting when he fasts, or of cooling off when he performs major ritual ablutions, or of sightseeing when he performs the major pilgrimage to Makkah. What matters, says al-Shāṭibī, is that the person is not acting hypocritically but, rather, simply has motives relating to personal interests in addition to the intention to engage in worship. And it is to this that he refers as *tashrīk*.
- ¹⁴³ Bearing in mind that in relation to certain expressions of worship, such as the pilgrimage to Makkah and fasting, proxyhood is supported by a number of scholars based on Prophetic hadiths which permit it and indicate its validity.
- ¹⁴⁴ Particularly Questions 5 and 6.
- ¹⁴⁵ Namely, Questions 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12.
- ¹⁴⁶ See the details and applied examples in al-Shāṭibī's discussion of Question 4.
- ¹⁴⁷ For the kinds of evidence and examples upon which he bases his conclusions, see the conclusion of Question 4.
- ¹⁴⁸ The Arabic text reads "second," though in fact, this type is the "first form" referred in the very beginning of the quotation [translator's note].
- ¹⁴⁹ By 'an ordinary degree of certainty' (*al-qat' al-'ādī*), al-Shāṭibī means harm which might fail to materialize, albeit in very rare cases. This is contrasted with 'logical certainty' (*al-qat' al-'aqlī*), which applies to harm which is virtually certain to be realized, since if it is not realized, it is not considered a certainty.
- ¹⁵⁰ Al-Shāṭibī's use of the phrase "for the most part" is an allusion to certain cases in which he justifies the use of legal artifices provided that they conflict with no fundamental or objective of the Law, and to which he refers in a section appended to this question.
- ¹⁵¹ In other words, he seeks to circumvent the legal ruling in question by preserving its outward form while dispensing with its essence and intent; in this manner, he strives through legitimate action to achieve some aim other than that for which the action was originally prescribed.
- ¹⁵² If one reflects on them, however, one will see that they actually constitute four groups rather than three.
- ¹⁵³ I refer in particular to parts of *al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-I'tiṣām*.
- ¹⁵⁴ The reason for this is that al-Shāṭibī's direct treatment of the five essentials and others of the interests which the Lawgiver intends to preserve through legislation were summarized in the beginning of the last section based on the contents of 'The Book of Higher Objectives.'
- ¹⁵⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt* has no fewer than thirteen introductions, which al-Shāṭibī describes as "the prologues required before entering into a discussion of the issues treated in the book."

- ¹⁵⁶ The dispute over this issue appears to be due simply to a failure to clarify terms. Those who, like al-Shāṭibī, hold that the fundamentals of jurisprudence are definitive and admit of no speculation are actually speaking of the ‘fundamentals of evidence’ and the universal principles of Islamic Law. Such scholars consider all detailed discussions and applied interpretations to fall outside the purview of these ‘fundamentals,’ even if such discussions and interpretations revolve around the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence and the books written on this subject. As for those who hold that the fundamentals of jurisprudence involve speculation, they are speaking of ‘the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence,’ which does include significant speculative aspects. Evidence for its speculative nature may be seen in the many disputes which arise in relation to it, disputes which al-Shāṭibī strove to exclude from the realm of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. Hence his decision to open his book with the affirmation that the fundamentals of jurisprudence are definitive rather than speculative. In this connection see al-Juwaynī’s *al-Burhān*, 1:85–86.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:30.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:38.
- ¹⁵⁹ The rulings laid down in Madinah are an extension and detailing of what was established in Makkah, and should be viewed and understood in light of this fact.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:46–47.
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid., 3:102.
- ¹⁶² Ibid.
- ¹⁶³ Al-Shāṭibī does not mean to say that abrogation of the Makkhan universals is simply rare, since in subsequent lines he denies this possibility outright. Rather, what he means to say is that Makkhan legislation includes some specific rulings, and that among these there are some which were abrogated. An example of these is the ruling on ritual prayer, which in Makkah consisted of two *rak‘ahs* each, after which the known additions were introduced.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:104–105.
- ¹⁶⁵ I have placed this phrase between quotation marks given the fact that, as those well-versed in the Arabic language will be aware, it is improper to form a *nis-bah* adjective using the plural form of a noun [the Arabic word rendered as ‘objectives-based’ (*maqāṣid*) has been derived from the plural noun *maqāṣid* – translator’s note]. I am obliged to use this form, however, just as scholars before me have been obliged to form adjectives such as *uṣūlī* [from the plural noun *uṣūl*, plural of *asl*], *a’rābī* from the plural noun *a’rāb*, and so on.
- ¹⁶⁶ Regarding the question of whether al-Shāṭibī mentions the three ways in which the preservation of life is achieved, or only two of them, see Darrāz’s commentary, 4:27.

- ¹⁶⁷ That is, to someone who, by the strict standards of Islamic Law, would not qualify to receive zakah [translator's note].
- ¹⁶⁸ As, for example, when one is able to kill it with a stone, but without slitting its throat as Islam requires [translator's note].
- ¹⁶⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:27–32.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 3:209; in this connection, see also pages 153 and 255.
- ¹⁷¹ *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:38.
- ¹⁷² Ibid., 2:39.
- ¹⁷³ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:213. See also 2:299, where al-Shāṭibī seeks to define more precisely the difference between commands and prohibitions having to do with essentials and exigencies respectively.
- ¹⁷⁴ In fact, it appears that a number of issues relating to 'permitted' actions were discussed from an early date. We have, for example, the view for which al-Ka'bī (d. 317 AH/929 AC), a leading Mu'tazilite, became known, namely, that any act which is classified as 'permitted' is, in fact, obligatory (*wājib*) because it causes one to avoid doing that which would be forbidden (*ḥarām*), and whatever causes one to avoid doing that which is forbidden, is obligatory. Al-Ka'bī's position has been refuted over the centuries by various *uṣūliyyūn*, including al-Shāṭibī himself (*al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:124ff.).
- ¹⁷⁵ See *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:150.
- ¹⁷⁶ Namely, the categories of 'permitted' (*mubāḥ*), 'recommended' (*mandūb*), 'obligatory' (*wājib*), 'undesirable' (*makrūh*) and 'forbidden' (*muḥarram*).
- ¹⁷⁷ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:149.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ For the evidence upon which he bases this view and his response to possible objections, see *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:149–150.
- ¹⁸⁰ This aspect will be mentioned at the end of this section.
- ¹⁸¹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:109.
- ¹⁸² Ibid., 1:115.
- ¹⁸³ Ibid., 1:124–125.
- ¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 1:109–130.
- ¹⁸⁵ In his commentary on the hadiths found in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-‘Irāqi tells us that this hadith was narrated by Aḥmad, Abū Ya'lā and al-Ṭabarānī with a good chain of transmission (marginal gloss by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:114).
- ¹⁸⁶ Narrated by Muslim.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:123.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:128.
- ¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁰ This is because enjoying such things to the degree necessary for survival is not

merely permissible, but obligatory.

191 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:131-132.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid., 1:139.

195 See, for example, *Ibid.*, 3:231-235 and 4:210-211.

196 Ibid., 1:182.

197 Ibid., 1:181.

198 Ibid., 3:232-233.

199 Ibid., 1:187.

200 Ibid., 3:233.

201 Ibid., 4:210.

202 Ibid.

203 See the earlier classification of permissible activities based on individual and collective considerations, and in particular, Categories 3 and 4, to which al-Shāṭibī is referring here.

204 Question 4, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:194.

205 Ibid., 1:195.

206 In Chapter Three, Section Three. What is written here has been combined with what is written there to avoid repetition.

207 In other words, both primary and secondary objectives are included in the first type of effects, namely, those for the sake of which their causes were established.

208 See Chapter One of this study, or Question 2 under the discussion of Type 4.

209 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:243-244.

210 On this point, see *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:394-396.

211 Ibid., 1:193.

212 Ibid., 1:197-198.

213 Ibid., 1:197.

214 Ibid., 2:331.

215 Specifically, al-Shāṭibī is referring to Question 6 of the issues dealing with condition-related rulings (*al-aḥkām al-wad'iyyah*). The late 'Abd Allāh Darrāz erred in referring the reader to Question 6 of Type 4 in 'The Book of Objectives' rather than to Question 6 in the discussion of condition-related rulings.

216 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:332.

217 Ibid., 1:196.

218 Namely, that the individual has the choice of whether or not to concern himself with effects when he engages in some action to establish causes.

219 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:201.

- ²²⁰ Ibid.
- ²²¹ What this means is that the total number of levels is six. We note, however, that when al-Shātibī referred us earlier to these aspects, he said that there were five, not six. This may either be due to an error introduced into the word, or because he did not count the final (sixth) aspect or level due to the fact that it is composed of all the aspects or levels which preceded it, as we shall see.
- ²²² *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:205.
- ²²³ The Arabic text reads ‘due to’ rather than ‘despite.’ The latter makes most sense in the context, however [translator’s note].
- ²²⁴ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:219-227.
- ²²⁵ Ibid., 1:219.
- ²²⁶ Ibid., 1:227.
- ²²⁷ Ibid.
- ²²⁸ ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz notes in the margin of *al-Muwāfaqāt* (1:140) that this hadith is narrated in *Taysīr al-Tahrijr* on the authority of all five compilers of hadiths with the exception of Abū Dāwūd.
- ²²⁹ On the margin of *al-Muwāfaqāt* (1:228), Darrāz notes that this hadith was narrated by Mālik and al-Tirmidhī, who described it as a good, authentic hadith. It is also narrated by al-Nasa’ī and Ibn Mājah, by Ibn Ḥabbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and by al-Ḥakim, who describes it as having a sound chain of transmission.
- ²³⁰ Narrated by Muslim and al-Nasa’ī as it appears in *al-Taysīr* (Darrāz, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:140).
- ²³¹ Al-Shātibī was quoted earlier as stating that there is no evidence that human beings are obliged to concern themselves with the effects of the causes which they bring about. Hence, I do not know what view he would take of passages such as these, which he quotes himself.
- ²³² *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:228-230.
- ²³³ Ibid., 1:230.
- ²³⁴ That is, without falling into the dangers which often attend concern for outcomes and which were termed earlier, “false gods and impurities.”
- ²³⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:232-233.
- ²³⁶ Ibid., 1:234.

CHAPTER THREE

- ¹ See Chapter 2, Section 2.
- ² *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:199.
- ³ An example of this phenomenon may be seen in the area of pricing, which will be clarified in the next section under the heading, “Objectives-based interpretation of texts.”

- ⁴ See Glossary of Terms under *al-munāsabah* [translator's note].
- ⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:305-306.
- ⁶ See *Ibid.*, 2:300-304.
- ⁷ See Note 4 above [translator's note].
- ⁸ It would have been more fitting for him to say, “the requirement that Muslims fast during a certain month of the year and not others” than to say, “during the day rather than at night,” since it is easy to see why fasting must be during the day rather than at night, whereas the specification of a certain month in which Muslims must fast is not readily explained based on human reasoning or common sense.
- ⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:80.
- ¹⁰ See *Ibid.*, 2:304 and *al-I'tisām*, 2:132.
- ¹¹ Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Maqqarī, *Qawā'id al-Fiqh*, p.73.
- ¹² That is, Imam Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī.
- ¹³ That is, what is required is that one donate as zakah exactly those substances (such as dates, wheat, etc.) which the Lawgiver has specified; one is not permitted to donate their value in money or to donate something else as a substitute.
- ¹⁴ Imam Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān.
- ¹⁵ See Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zanjānī, *Takhrij al-Furū'* 'alā al-Uṣūl', pp.111ff., where one finds secondary rulings which arise from this and other instances of *ta'līl*.
- ¹⁶ Narrated by Muslim.
- ¹⁷ “The offerings given for the sake of God are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and [for] those who are over-burdened with debts, and [for every struggle] in God's cause, and [for] the wayfarer: [this is] an ordinance from God – and God is All-Knowing, Wise” (Qur'an, 9:60).
- ¹⁸ In other words, that it is an expense which those answerable before the Law are required to take out of their wealth.
- ¹⁹ *Takhrij al-Furū'* 'alā al-Uṣūl', p.110.
- ²⁰ That is, their fruits and anticipated benefits.
- ²¹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:201.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 2:399.
- ²³ For the texts referred to, see the following note.
- ²⁴ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:400.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:302.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:137-138.
- ²⁷ When the room is free of impurities.
- ²⁸ *Qawā'id al-Fiqh*, Rule 10.

- 29 *Al-Burhān*, 2:939.
- 30 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- 31 *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:160.
- 32 This represents still another objectives-based interpretation of ritual purity.
- 33 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:24.
- 34 In other words, he believes that these set numbers of *rak‘ahs* conceal a mystery, as it were, and a manifestation of God’s kindness which we human beings are unable to discern.
- 35 The Arabic phrase rendered as “we do not seek to understand it” is *lam nasta‘milhu*; however, it appears that it ought to read, *lam nast‘limhu* [translator’s note].
- 36 *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl*, p.204.
- 37 Rulings on worship, which, according to some, are to be taken at face value and not be traced back to a particular basis or *‘illah*, are generally not to be used as the basis for analogical deduction, or *qiyās* [translator’s note].
- 38 *Fiqh al-Zakāh*, 1:28-29.
- 39 See *A‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘in*, Part II from the beginning.
- 40 Ibid., 2:78-79.
- 41 Ibid., 2:137-138.
- 42 Ibid., 2:107.
- 43 *Qawā‘id al-Fiqh*, Rule 72.
- 44 *Al-Burhān*, 2:926.
- 45 *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Hājib*, 2:238 (quoted by Wahbah al-Zuhayli in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, 2:762).
- 46 The Arabic text reads simply, “cooperation,” rather than “lack of cooperation” [translator’s note].
- 47 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:308-309.
- 48 See Distinction No. 22 of al-Qarāfi’s distinctions, and *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:370.
- 49 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:386.
- 50 *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl*, p.205.
- 51 That is, in attempting to identify a wise purpose behind the times for the five daily prayers. Al-Maqqarī is thus citing an example of the extremes to which certain scholars go in searching out explanations for legal rulings.
- 52 That is, the time when one returns home to eat and rest, as most people are accustomed to doing.
- 53 *Qawā‘id al-Fiqh*, Rule 158.
- 54 *Takhrīj al-Furū‘ alā al-Uṣūl*, pp.38-40.
- 55 Ibid., p.110; for another instance of *ta‘līl* which al-Zanjānī attributes to al-Shāfi‘ī, see pp. 299ff. of the same work.
- 56 *Al-Ibhāj fī Sharḥ al-Minhāj*, p.3:41.

- 57 The followers of Jahm Bin Ṣafwān, the Jahmites were a sect known for their deterministic views [translator's note].
- 58 *Sharḥ al-Kawka'b al-Munīr*, 1:312.
- 59 See *A'lām al-Muwaqqī'īn*, 1:196.
- 60 *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sā'ādah wa Manshūr Walāyat al-'Ilm wa al-Irādah*, 2:22.
- 61 See Chapter One of his thesis entitled, *Ta'līl al-Aḥkām*.
- 62 Ibid., p.96.
- 63 *Al-Iḥkām*, 3:380.
- 64 Ibid., 3:411.
- 65 *Muntahā al-Wuṣūl wa al-Amal fi 'Ilmay al-Uṣūl wa al-Jadal*, p.184.
- 66 *Qawā'id al-Fiqh*, Rule 864.
- 67 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:126.
- 68 Ibid., 1:139.
- 69 *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, 1:6.
- 70 That is, in his commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's book *al-Minhāj*, which is entitled, *al-Ihbāj fī Sharḥ al-Minhāj*.
- 71 *Al-Ihbāj*, 3:62.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:380.
- 74 *Taysīr al-Taḥrīr*, 3:304.
- 75 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an – Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corp., 1989).
- 76 *Al-Tawdīḥ fī Hall Ghawāmid al-Taqīḥ*, 2:63.
- 77 That is, the claims of jurisprudents who supported *ta'līl* and of scholastic theologians who opposed it.
- 78 *Al-Ihbāj*, 3:41; see also *Jam' al-Jawāmi'*, 2:233.
- 79 Quoting from *Sullam al-Wuṣūl li Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Sūl* by Muḥammad Bakhtī al-Mutī'ī (al-Ḥanafī), 4:55.
- 80 *Taysīr al-Taḥrīr*, 3:304-305.
- 81 *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:379-381.
- 82 Historically there has been disagreement among groups such as the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites and others over the question of whether it is necessary for God to demonstrate the greatest possible kindness (*al-lutf wa al-aslah*, or *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣlah*) to His servants, where 'kindness' is defined as those circumstances and conditions which make it easier and more likely for human beings to obey His commands and prohibitions rather than disobey them. According to most Mu'tazilites, belief in God's justice entails the belief in the necessity of such kindness, since in their view, its absence would be inconsistent with this divine attribute. The Ash'arites, by contrast, deny its necessity [translator's note].

- 83 *Al-Taḥrīr wal-Tanwīr*, 1:379-381
- 84 *Dawābiṭ al-Maṣlahah*, pp.96-97.
- 85 *Ta‘līl al-Aḥkām*, p.105.
- 86 Such writers include the late scholar Allal al-Fasi (*Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, 3) and Ahmad al-Khamlishi, who goes to such extremes in this attribution that he lumps al-Rāzī together with the Zahirites (*Wujhat Nazar*, 286)!
- 87 *Tafsīr Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 2:154.
- 88 The fact that he is simply presenting his companions’ position here rather than his own is evidenced by the fact that this Qur’anic verse, which may be interpreted to support the rejection of *ta‘līl*, is cited by al-Rāzī elsewhere in a manner which favors *ta‘līl*, as will become apparent shortly.
- 89 This is a theoretical, rational method which consists in contemplating the ruling concerned and the benefit for the sake of which it may have been laid down. If, through this process, there emerges a benefit which appears to be ‘appropriate’ to the ruling in question, it is considered to be the ruling’s ‘*illah*’ in light of this perceived ‘appropriateness.’
- 90 Namely, that God Almighty has established the Law’s rulings for the benefit of human beings; it is this premise only which concerns us here.
- 91 For the sake of brevity, I have omitted points 3 and 4, including only those which I consider to be of greatest importance.
- 92 *Al-Maḥṣūl*, Part II, Section 2:237-242.
- 93 Ibid., Part II, Section 2:291.
- 94 Ibid., Part II, Section 2:240. This statement by al-Rāzī is, in essence, no different from the Mu’tazilites’ arguments for the necessity of divine concern for human interests.
- 95 Ibid., Part II, Section 2:242.
- 96 An example of an outward condition or sign associated with a legal ruling would be that someone who has owned as much as \$150.00 in savings for the past year will be required to pay zakah (i.e., 2.5 percent of this amount). The ownership of \$150.00 for the past year is the outward condition, or sign, that the person is required to pay zakah (the legal ruling), while this outward condition points to the ‘*illah*’ of this ruling. This ‘*illah*’, moreover, consists of both benefits to be achieved, such as helping others who do not own this amount of money and being reminded of the need to share what one has, and harm to be prevented, such as the tendency toward stinginess or greed which would be reinforced by not sharing one’s wealth, as well as, of course, the material benefit offered to those who receive this person’s zakah [translator’s note].
- 97 *Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, p.25.
- 98 *Ta‘līl al-Aḥkām*, pp.105-106.
- 99 *Al-Maḥṣūl*, Part II, Section 2:389ff.

- ¹⁰⁰ It may be helpful here to record what Ibn Taymiyah once noted – and rightly so – concerning al-Rāzī’s indecisiveness and the disparities which could be observed in his positions between one period and the next and one work and another. Ibn Taymiyah states, “As for Ibn al-Khaṭīb [i.e., al-Rāzī], he is quite restless and can’t settle on one position. Rather, he’s in a constant state of exploration and debate, like someone who is seeking something but has yet to find it. In this respect he is quite unlike Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī], who generally settles on a position and sticks with it” (*Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 6:55).
- ¹⁰¹ Al-Rāzī was variously known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn Khaṭīb al-Riyy in attribution to his father, who was the public orator for the Persian city al-Riyy.
- ¹⁰² The reasonable certainty being referred to here has to do with specific instances of *ta’līl* in relation to certain rulings, and particularly those which are based on independent reasoning, or *ijtihad*. As for *ta’līl* in general, it is clear from what we have already quoted from al-Rāzī’s writings (for example, his statement that, “There is unanimous agreement that the divinely revealed Laws concern themselves with human interests”) that he considers it as a matter of principle to yield absolute certainty.
- ¹⁰³ *A‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*, 2:75.
- ¹⁰⁴ That is, Abū Sulaymān al-Baghdādī al-Īshbāhānī, Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī al-Ζāhirī, who was the Zahirites’ first imam (200-270 AH/815-883 AC).
- ¹⁰⁵ *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 8:77.
- ¹⁰⁶ *A‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*, 2:74.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Al-Iḥkām*, 8:113.
- ¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Question 7 on commands and prohibitions, Part III of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, and *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:229-230.
- ¹⁰⁹ It bears noting that al-Juwainī states, “According to those with insight into the true nature of things, we should not consider those who reject analogical deduction to be scholars of the Muslim nation or bearers of the Law. For all their obstinacy, they stand perplexed in the face of what has been established thoroughly and beyond the shadow of a doubt. Moreover, if someone shows no regard for texts which have been handed down by so many distinct chains of narrators that their reliability cannot be called into question and has no hesitations about defying them, then his words are not to be trusted, nor are his teachings. For such people are on the level of mere common folk. Hence, how can they be viewed as qualified to engage in independent reasoning when they engage in no such reasoning? Rather, all they do is to stop at the superficial meanings of the words without delving any deeper” (*al-Burhān*, 2:819).
- ¹¹⁰ A full presentation and detailed discussion of Ibn Ḥazm’s views would fill volumes many times the size of Ibn Ḥazm’s own writings, and would thus call for

- a separate study devoted to this purpose.
- 111 This is typical of Ibn Ḥazm's usual hyperbole; in any case, our concern is with what follows.
- 112 *Al-Iḥkām*, 8:101.
- 113 Ibid., 8:99.
- 114 Ibid., 8:102.
- 115 Ibid., 8:100.
- 116 Ibid., 8:102.
- 117 Ibid., 8:100.
- 118 Ibid., 8:103.
- 119 Ibid., 8:104.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 Ibid., 8:102-103.
- 122 Ibid., 8:125.
- 123 Ibn Ḥazm, p.437ff. See also *Tārīkh al-Madhbāh al-Fiqhiyah*, pp.430-431.
- 124 This is the *ta‘līl* offered by Ibn Ashur in his interpretation of this verse. See *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 4:300.
- 125 It appears that what the text should read is, “the first possibility,” rather than “the second...”
- 126 *Al-Iḥkām*, 8:112.
- 127 By which he means the claim that God’s actions and rulings may all be understood in terms of their intent to serve human interests. See *al-Iḥkām*, 8:12off.
- 128 *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 17:46.
- 129 *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 1:244; see also *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:264-265.
- 130 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, narrated also by al-Bukhārī.
- 131 In the Arabic, Ḥamal ibn Nābighah’s statement is in rhymed prose, a fact which is not reflected in the English translation [translator’s note].
- 132 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, 11:178.
- 133 *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 3:297-300.
- 134 See *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 22:20, and *Lubāb al-Taqawwul*, p.174.
- 135 These can be found in *al-Iḥkām*, 8:76 to the end of the book.
- 136 *A‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*, 1:127ff.
- 137 Ibid., 3:3.
- 138 *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 2:64.
- 139 *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyyah*, p.48.
- 140 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:6.
- 141 Depending on the context, I have chosen to render the term *māṣlahah* variously as ‘benefit,’ ‘source of benefit,’ and ‘interest’ [translator’s note].
- 142 This is the definition offered by Ibn Qudāmah al-Hanbālī in *Rawdat al-Nāzir*

wa Jannat al-Munāzir, 1:412. It is quoted by al-Ghazālī, who nevertheless declines to adopt it (*al-Muṣṭaṣfā*, 1:286). And the fact is that if we bear in mind the religious, otherworldly dimension of this definition, there is no need for such hesitation. For the definition offered by al-Ghazālī, namely, that interest consists in “preserving the five-fold intent of the Law, that is, the preservation of people’s religion, lives, faculty of reason, progeny and material wealth” is, in essence, nothing but a clarification and detailing of the definition offered earlier by Ibn Qudāmah (*al-Muṣṭaṣfā*, 1:287).

143 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, Part 2, Section 2:218, and al-Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuhūl*, p.215.

144 *Al-Maḥṣūl*, vol 2, Section 3:240.

145 *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 1:111-12.

146 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:25.

147 Taken from Question 8 relating to the first type of objectives (*al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:37-39).

148 Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 1:8.

149 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:26.

150 *Sharḥ Tanqīḥ al-Fuṣūl*, p.78.

151 *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 1:7.

152 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:26-27.

153 Ibid., 2:386.

154 *Āridat al-Āḥwadhbī*, 5:199.

155 This phrase occurs no fewer than 52 times in different *sūrabs* of the Qur'an.

156 *Al-Muṣṭaṣfā*, 1:287.

157 *Al-Mankhūl*, 359.

158 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:87.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid., 2:315.

161 Ibid., 2:333.

162 *Al-Irshād ilā Qawā'i' al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Itiqād*, p.259 (quoted in *Madhāhib al-Islāmiyīn* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, 1:743).

163 *Ḍawābiṭ al-Maṣlahah*, p.65.

164 If he had said, “the majority of the Ash‘arites,” this would have been correct, since this is the teaching of most Ash‘arites as opposed to certain fair-minded individuals among them who, as will become clear shortly, agree with the view held by Maturidite Ḥanafites and others. However, to claim that this is the view of “the majority of Muslims” is preposterous!

165 *Ḍawābiṭ al-Maṣlahah*, p.65.

166 *Al-Burhān*, 1:91.

167 *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah*, 2:42.

- 168 *Qawā'id al-Āḥkām*, 1:5-6. As will be seen below, al-Shāṭibī also quotes Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām as stating that earthly benefits and sources of harm are recognized on the basis of human necessities, experiences and customs.
- 169 From Ibn Ashur's commentary entitled, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 14:259.
- 170 Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah al-Nabī*, p.r.
- 171 That is, the verse in which God states, “Behold, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men; and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all this] in mind” (16:90).
- 172 *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 14:259.
- 173 Narrated by al-Ṭabarī with a chain of transmission that originates with Ibn ‘Abbās. See *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 28:168.
- 174 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- 175 *Al-Āḥkām*, 8:88.
- 176 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwa*, 15:8.
- 177 *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 8:84.
- 178 Ibid., 8:82.
- 179 That is, both in respect to its original, essential goodness, and in respect to the fact that the Prophet has declared it lawful [translator's note].
- 180 *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*, 2:6-7.
- 181 *Raf‘ al-Hājib ‘an Ibn al-Hājib*, p.1, Sheet 82, Side b, quoted in a marginal gloss by Muhammad Hasan Hitu (*al-Mankhūl*, p.15).
- 182 Al-Ghazālī is referring here to the Mu‘tazilites and their claim that God must provide for human beings' interests and that it would be impossible for Him to do otherwise. Note how al-Ghazālī distances himself from this claim despite the fact that he expresses the same view, and in even stronger terms when, in connection with the preservation of the five ‘essentials,’ he states that “it would be impossible for any religion not to include it [i.e., means of preserving these essentials]” (*al-Muṣṭaṣfā*, 1:288). In fact, in the same context, in relation to the prohibition against intoxicants as a means of preserving the human faculty of reason, al-Ghazālī states – without attributing the view to those who affirm the ability of human reason to discern good and evil – “nor could this be denied by the minds of the reasonable or disregarded by any law which concerns itself with preserving human interests, material and spiritual” (*Shifā’ al-Ghalil*, p.164).
- A certain late scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, namely, Amīr Bād Shāh, has pointed out that the dispute with the Mu‘tazilites over the question of necessity might be merely a matter of terminology. He states, “Indeed, if they were to interpret the term ‘necessity’ (*wujūb*) not in terms of obligation, but as that which simply must be [logically speaking], there would be no conflict between them”

(*Taysīr al-Taḥrīr*, 3:303).

Al-Ṭūfī proposes an interesting way out of the dispute over whether God's preservation of human interests is obligatory for God (*wujūb*) or simply an expression of His goodness and bounty (*tafaddūl*), saying, "The truth of the matter is that the preservation of human interests is obligatory for God Almighty (*wājibah min Allāh*) in the sense that He has committed Himself to this out of His goodness and bounty, not because He is under obligation to some outside party (*lā wājibah ‘alayhi*)" (*al-Maṣlaḥah fī al-Tashrī‘ al-Islāmī wa Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī*, p.214).

- 183 Note the frequency with which he 'hedges' in this connection!
- 184 *Shifa’ al-Ghalīl*, pp.162-163.
- 185 *Sullam al-Wuṣūl li Sharḥ Niyāhat al-Sūl*, printed on the margins of al-Isnawī's *Nihāyat al-Sūl fī Sharḥ Minhāj al-Uṣūl*, 1:85-86.
- 186 See *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sā‘ādah*, 2:55-57.
- 187 Ibid., 2:117.
- 188 *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:321.
- 189 Ibid., 2:322.
- 190 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:50.
- 191 Ibid., 1:349.
- 192 He does not mention him by name; rather, he simply states that "someone has said...", after which he quotes his words as they appear in *Qawā‘id al-Āḥkām*, 1:10.
- 193 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:48.
- 194 *Nazariyat al-Maṣlaḥah fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmi*, p. mīm.
- 195 Narrated and deemed authentic by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.
- 196 *Āriḍat al-Āḥwadhbī*, 6:54.
- 197 *Al-Tariqah al-Ḥukmiyah fī al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyah*, p.240.
- 198 Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the authors of the *Sunan* (Darrāz). As for the term *bay‘ al-ḥaṣāh*, it is said to refer to a practice which originated in pre-Islamic times in which the buyer or seller would say, "If I throw a pebble at you, the sale has to go forward." Alternatively, it may refer to a transaction in which one person would say, "I will sell you whatever commodity your pebble strikes when you throw it," or, "I will sell you land that extends as far as you can throw a pebble." All of these types of sales are invalid and are considered to be types of *bay‘ al-gharar* due to the ignorance which they reflect [translator's note; see *Lisān al-‘Arab*].
- 199 The term *maqāthī* refers to fruits and vegetables which grow underground.
- 200 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:151-152.
- 201 Ibid., 3:46.
- 202 Ibid., 3:153.

- ²⁰³ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:240.
- ²⁰⁴ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:50 and 4:191; see also the end of Part I of al-Qādī ‘Iyād’s *Tartīb al-Madārik*.
- ²⁰⁵ Ibid., 4:189.
- ²⁰⁶ Ibid., 4:191.
- ²⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁸ For the full text of al-Ṭūfī’s statement, see *Maṣādir al-Tashrīf al-Islāmī fī Mā Lā Naṣṣa Fihi* by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf, pp.129ff.
- ²⁰⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:39-40.
- ²¹⁰ Question 5 dealing with human objectives; see also the summary presented in Chapter Two above in the section entitled, “Human Objectives.”
- ²¹¹ *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 2:189.
- ²¹² See Chapter Two, Section 2 (“Presentation of the Theory,” Type 2).
- ²¹³ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:65-66.
- ²¹⁴ Ibid., 4:324.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid.
- ²¹⁶ Ibid., 4:115.
- ²¹⁷ Ibid., *al-I'tiṣām*, 2:293.
- ²¹⁸ Ibid., 2:297.
- ²¹⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:44.
- ²²⁰ The terms ‘primary intention’ and ‘secondary intention’ will be clarified further in the next section.
- ²²¹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:393.
- ²²² Ibid., 3:393.
- ²²³ Ibid., 3:154.
- ²²⁴ Ibid., 2:396-397. In the same context (pp. 399-400), see al-Shāṭibī’s application of this division to the objectives of ritual prayer and fasting.
- ²²⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:152.
- ²²⁶ Ibid., 1:67.
- ²²⁷ Ibid., 1:67-68
- ²²⁸ Ibid., 1:351.
- ²²⁹ Ibid., 1:353.
- ²³⁰ See Questions 2 and 3 concerning Type 4 in the discussion of the higher objectives of the Lawgiver.
- ²³¹ Namely, primary, explicit commands and prohibitions.
- ²³² This issue is referred to by scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as the question of “whether commanding one thing implies a prohibition of its opposite or opposites.” Or conversely, “whether the prohibition of something implies the command to do its opposite.” A related question is whether those things without which one’s obligations cannot be fulfilled are likewise obligatory.

233 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:394.

234 *Miftāḥ al-Wuṣūl*, 30:31.

235 *Huṣūl al-Ma'mūl min Ḥilm al-Uṣūl*, p.74.

236 There is no point in the qualifications which are sometimes added to this rule, as, for example, that those things without which explicitly stated obligations cannot be fulfilled are only obligatory if they are within human capabilities, since the human ability to perform an action is a precondition for all obligations under the Law. Another example of such a qualification is the division of “those things without which explicitly stated obligations cannot be fulfilled” into (1) those things upon which obligation (*wujūb*) depends [*ma yatawaqqqa - fu 'alayhi al-wujūb* – 305], and (2) those things upon which existence (*wujūd*) depends [*ma yatawaqqaf 'alayhi al-wujūd*], where it is held that the former is not obligatory, such as the commencement of the time period for a given ritual prayer before one is required to perform it, the possession of the minimum required amount of money for the past year before one is required to pay zakah, and possession of sufficient financial resources before one is required to perform the pilgrimage to Makkah. Such a division, however, falls outside the sphere of this rule, since the rule has to do with those things which have already become obligatory with respect to those people of whom they are required, and not with those things which have yet to become obligatory.

237 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:410.

238 See Chapter Two, Section One.

239 *Al-Jiṣām*, 2:36off.

240 *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyah*, p.19.

241 Proposed in an article entitled, “*Masālik al-Kashf 'an Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah Bayn al-Shāṭibī wa Ibn 'Āshūr*,” in *al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyah Magazine* published by the Amir Abd al-Qadir Islamic University in Qasantinah, Algeria, No.2, 1407 AH/1986 AC.

242 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:29.

243 Ibid., 2:53.

244 Ibid., 1:36-37.

245 Ibid.

246 The term rendered here as “that which is speculative” is *al-zanniyāt*, or, ‘speculative proofs or evidences.’ In his definition of the term ‘speculative evidence’ (*al-dalil al-zannī*), Mustafa Sano explains that evidence which is speculative yields reasonable, but not conclusive, certainty, and that the speculative nature of a given piece of textual evidence will be attributable either to its chain of transmission (*sanad*), its content (*matn*), or both. Textual evidence which is deemed speculative based on its chain of transmission might include, for example, a hadith passed down on the authority of the Prophet by one,

two or even more individuals but which does not meet the requirements of *tawātur*:²⁴⁷ Any report or account which does not meet the standards for *tawātur* is deemed to be speculative rather than conclusive. As for the classification of textual evidence as speculative based on its content (*matn*), this is due to the fact that it is subject to more than one interpretation. Most Qur'anic verses are classified as speculative on this basis despite the fact that their chain of transmission is of unquestionable reliability. All hadiths are likewise speculative with respect to their *matn*, including those which meet the criteria for *tawātur*. As for texts which are classified as speculative in terms of both their *matn* and their *sanad*, they include all hadiths with the exception of those which are *mutawātirah* as well as all evidence based on independent reasoning or interpretation, including the processes of *qiyās*, *istihsān*, *sadd al-dharrā'i*, and the like [translator's note].

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 4:327.

²⁴⁸ And this despite the fact that Darrāz tends for the most part to be spare in his praise and excessive in his objections and corrections.

²⁴⁹ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:323-328.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 1:23.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 2:6.

²⁵² Ibid., 2:49.

²⁵³ As al-Shāṭibī states, "There is no higher universal under which these three universals may be subsumed; rather, they themselves are the fundamentals of the Law" (Ibid., 3:7).

²⁵⁴ That is, the essentials, exigencies and embellishments [translator's note].

²⁵⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:51.

²⁵⁶ See, for example, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:38.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 3:148.

²⁵⁸ See the discussion of primary and secondary objectives earlier in this section.

²⁵⁹ *Al-I'tiṣām*, 2:131-135.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ For a presentation and critique of this Aristotelian classification of types of induction, which was adopted by a number of Muslim philosophers and scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, including Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī, see distinguished scholar Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's book, *al-Usus al-Manṭiqiyah lil-Istiqrā'*, pp.13-32.

²⁶² "Masālik al-Kashf 'an Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah Bayn al-Shāṭibī wa Ibn 'Āshūr," *al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyah Magazine*, the Amir Abd al-Qadir Islamic University, Qasantinah, Algeria, No.2, 1407 AH/1986 AC,

²⁶³ These are: (1) The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing Islamic Law, (2) The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing the Law for people's

understanding, (3) The Lawgiver's higher objectives in establishing the Law as a standard of conduct, (4) The Lawgiver's higher objectives in bringing human beings under the Law's jurisdiction, and (5) The role of human objectives in accountability before the Law.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:25.
- 2 Ibid., 1:21.
- 3 Chapter One, Section One.
- 4 Chapter One, Section Two.
- 5 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:48 and 4:29.
- 6 As a matter of fact, the scholar whom al-Shāṭibī mentions most next to al-Ghazālī is Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī. However, Ibn al-‘Arabī's name tends to come up in the context of al-Shāṭibī's discussion of miscellaneous issues, many of which bear no connection to the topic of objectives. In addition, al-Shāṭibī's debt to Ibn al-‘Arabī comes primarily within the framework of his overall debt to the Malikite school to which they both belong. See my earlier section entitled, "The Notion of 'Higher Objectives' in the Malikite School" (Chapter One, Section Two).
- 7 See my earlier discussion of the category of 'permissible' in Chapter Two, Section Three, "Dimensions of the Theory."
- 8 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:23.
- 9 *Al-Burhān*, 2:923.
- 10 Ibid., 2:919 and 938.
- 11 What I have presented here concerning this idea is further clarified and illustrated with examples taken from al-Shāṭibī's discussion of this topic.
- 12 See *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:180-182 and 3:130-134.
- 13 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:228.
- 14 In the realm of Sufism, the term *takhalluq* refers, more specifically, to the process of assuming the character traits of God as manifested in the divine names [translator's note].
- 15 Ibid., 1:292.
- 16 Ibid., 3:376.
- 17 *Al-Itiṣām*, 2:125.
- 18 *Al-Furūq*, (Differences), No. 14.
- 19 *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 2:9-10.
- 20 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:156-158.
- 21 *Qawā'id al-Aḥkām*, 1:137.
- 22 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:108-119.

- ²³ See Chapter One, Section Two, “The Notion of ‘Higher Objectives’ in the Malikite School.”
- ²⁴ Proceedings of the Ibn Rushd Seminar, Publications of the College of Arts and Sciences in Rabat, 1978.
- ²⁵ *Bidāyat al-Mujtabid*, 1:15.
- ²⁶ I have translated the Arabic word *ma‘nā* as ‘aim’ rather than as ‘meaning,’ since it is more appropriate to the present context [translator’s note].
- ²⁷ Especially given the fact that Turki is constantly speaking about objectives, al-Shāṭibī, and *istiṣlāḥ*. Indeed, he announced a number of years ago that among the projects he intended to undertake in the future was the preparation of a study on al-Shāṭibī and the higher objectives of the Law. Specifically, he makes mention of this in his book *Munāzarāt fi Uṣūl al-Shari‘ah*, p.528, which was published for the first time in 1978 in the French language.
- ²⁸ *Manāhij al-Adillah fī Ḥaqā’id al-Millah*, p.133.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.167.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p.180.
- ³¹ *Bunyat al-‘Aql al-‘Arabī*, p.554.
- ³² Ibid., 552.
- ³³ Ibid., 502.
- ³⁴ This book was published recently in 20 volumes.
- ³⁵ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:376.
- ³⁶ *Madā al-Hājah lil-Akdh bi Naz̄ariyat al-Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah fil-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, 1:150.
- ³⁷ *Al-I‘tiṣām*, 1:356.
- ³⁸ The mention of these two figures in particular is based on the possibility that the aforementioned reference to “a certain Ḥanbalite” came from one of them, since both Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Tartūsī speak frequently of their lengthy eastward journeys and their contact with numerous different schools, and since al-Shāṭibī frequently quotes from their writings.
- ³⁹ Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maqqarī is quoted as having said that he “met in Damascus with Shams al-Dīn ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, companion of the jurisprudent Ibn Taymiyah.” See *Nafḥ al-Tib*, 5:254, and *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.250.
- ⁴⁰ This phrase belongs to al-Shāṭibī and was quoted earlier in this discussion.
- ⁴¹ *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.63.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ That is, either through his lectures, or through the statement to be quoted in what follows.
- ⁴⁴ *A‘lām al-Fikr al-Islāmī fī Tārikh al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī*, p.84.
- ⁴⁵ Given earlier discussions in this book, I assume that this rule requires no further comment.

- 46 Al-Maqqarī came to Granada in the year 757 AH/1258 AC.
- 47 I am referring in particular here to the way in which al-Shāṭibī benefited from al-Maqarrī in relation to the higher objectives of the Law; as for the wider realm of jurisprudence and its principles, there can be no doubt but that the benefit passed on by al-Maqarrī was tremendous here as well. Suffice it to note in this connection that al-Maqarrī's book contains more than 1,200 principles of jurisprudence, which is more than that compiled by any other book in this field to my knowledge.
- 48 The first of these men lived in the 6th Century AH/12th Century AC, while the other two lived in the 7th Century AH/13th Century AC. Ibn Bashir wrote a book entitled, *al-Anwār al-Badī'ah ilā Asrār al-Shari'ah*. See *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab*, p. 87.
- 49 *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, p.50.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:99; see also p. 97.
- 52 Al-Shāṭibī repeats this generalization concerning all sciences several times, which indicates his deliberate insistence on preferring every early science over every later one! Such a stance, of course, is untenable and therefore cannot be taken as a given.
- 53 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:23.
- 54 Ibid., 1:25; the remainder of this quotation is found early in this section.
- 55 From his introduction to *al-Itiṣām*, p.4.
- 56 See the introduction to *Tārikh al-Ustādh al-Imām*, p. jīm.
- 57 In his introduction to *al-Muwāfaqāt*.
- 58 *Al-Mujaddidūn fil-Islām*, p.309.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid., p.204 and p.311. As for this ranking, as well as certain other of al-Šāṭibī's views on al-Shāṭibī's thought, I see no need to comment on them, since they go beyond the scope and purpose of this study.
- 61 *Al-Madkhāl al-Fiqhī al-Āmm*, 1:119.
- 62 *Dirāsah Tārikhiyah lil-Fiqh wa Uṣūlīhi*, p.219.
- 63 An allusion to Qur'an 2:260 [translator's note].
- 64 *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyyah*, p.8.
- 65 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:6.
- 66 For more on al-Ghazālī's role in drawing attention to the objectives of the Law and planting the initial seeds of the science of *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, see my earlier section entitled, "The Notion of 'Higher Objectives' as Treated by the *Uṣūliyyūn*" (Chapter One, Section One). It also bears noting that al-Ghazālī's mention of the objectives of the Law appeared first in his *Shifā' al-Ghalil*, which was then followed by *al-Muṣṭasfā*.

- 67 From his introduction to *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.8.
- 68 From his article entitled, “*Muqaddimāt fī ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*,” published in the *al-Shari‘ah wa al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyah* magazine, The College of Islamic Law, Kuwait University, No. 2, Muḥarram 1405/November 1984.
- 69 *Al-Tashrīf al-Islāmi: Uṣūluhu wa Maqāṣiduhu*, p.243.
- 70 Despite the fact that al-Shāṭibī’s ‘The Book of Higher Objectives’ is only one part of *al-Muwāfaqāt*, it is, nevertheless, an entire, self-contained book in terms of its subject matter and organization.
- 71 See my earlier section entitled, “Dimensions of the Theory” (Chapter Two, Section Three).
- 72 Quoted by Umar Sulayman al-Ashqar in his book, *Maqāṣid al-Mukallafīn*, p.97.
- 73 See Chapter Three, Section Three, which is devoted to the same theme.
- 74 “*Masālik al-Kashf ‘an Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah Bayn al-Shāṭibī wa Ibn ‘Āshūr*,” *al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyah Magazine* published by the Amir Abd al-Qadir Islamic University, Qasantinah, Algeria, No.2, 1407 AH/1986 AC.
- 75 That is, by the mufti’s saying to the inquirer, “The action you are inquiring about is forbidden according to such-and-such a school, but permissible according to such-and-such another school.”
- 76 That is, the hardship which causes such allowances to be necessary [translator’s note].
- 77 In thus referring to al-Shāṭibī, I am emulating Imam al-Shāfi‘ī who made a similar reference to his shaykh, Imam Mālik, when he stated, “If mention is made of scholars, then Mālik is the star [among them]” (*Tartīb al-Madārik*, 1:149).
- 78 As has been noted, it has become common practice to make additions to the title of *al-Muwāfaqāt*. However, I have found no basis for it either in al-Shāṭibī’s writings or in the writings of others who have had occasion to make mention of it.
- 79 From his introduction to *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, p.8.
- 80 These are the final words of the book. Following them we find that someone has written, “This is the conclusion to what exists of this work, which the author (may God have mercy upon him) did not complete.” It is on this basis that I favor the view that these are the last words al-Shāṭibī wrote, at least in his published works.
- 81 *A‘lām al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, p.76 (quoted by Abu al-Ajfan in his introduction to al-Shāṭibī’s *al-Ifādāt wa al-Inshādāt*, p.91).
- 82 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:105-106.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 A rather odd discovery I made is that Imam Ibn ‘Arafah – who, as we have

seen, was a contemporary of al-Shāṭibī’s – severely criticized certain jurisprudents for issuing fatwas without knowing how to provide the correct desinential inflections for the phrase, *bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm!* (*al-Miyyār*, 6:382) I wonder whether Abū Ḥanifah and Mālik would have known how to provide such inflections? And would I dare ask the same question concern the muftis and *mujtahids* who preceded them?

- 85 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:105-106.
- 86 *Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘*, 2:383.
- 87 *Al-Iḥbāj fī Sharḥ al-Minhāj*, 3:206.
- 88 Ibid., 1:8; as many will be aware, this commentary was begun by the father, and completed by his son.
- 89 Noted by ‘Abd Allāh Darrāz earlier in the text.
- 90 Based on Darrāz’s reference to what he found in al-Shawkānī’s *Irshād al-Fuhūl* (see Note 9 above).
- 91 Reference is being made here to the teaching of Abū Ḥanifah according to which murder by means of a heavy object (such as a rock, a club, or by drowning) does not call for the application of the law of retaliation (*al-qisāṣ*) but that, rather, it calls for a discretionary punishment. According to this view, the law of retaliation applies only to murder with a sharp object (such as a knife, a sword, etc.).
- 92 *Al-Burhān*, 2:1338.
- 93 The other three being Imam Abū Ḥanifah, Imam Ibn Ḥanbal, and Imam Mālik [translator’s note].
- 94 *Al-Burhān*, 2:927.
- 95 *Al-Mankhūl*, 355.
- 96 *Al-Furūq*, (Differences), p.78.
- 97 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:106-107.
- 98 Ibid., 4:170.
- 99 Ibid., 4:174-175.
- 100 Al-Shāṭibī is referring here to the Kharijites in particular.
- 101 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:179.
- 102 “He it is who has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, containing messages that are clear in and by themselves (*āyāt muhkamāt*) – and these are the essence of the divine writ – as well as others that are allegorical (*mutashābihāt*). Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine writ which has been expressed in allegory, seeking out [what is bound to create] confusion and seeking to [arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save God knows its final meaning...” (Qur’ān, 3:7) [translator’s note].
- 103 *Al-I’tiṣām*, 1:244-245.

- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:200.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah wa Makārimuhā*, pp.51-52.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Falsafat al-Tashrīf al-Islāmī*, p.41.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah al-Islāmiyah*, pp.15-16.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.27.
- ¹¹⁰ Among Ḥanafite scholars, that is.
- ¹¹¹ That is, in the view of Imam al-Shāfi‘ī.
- ¹¹² *Ta’sīs al-Nazar*, p.54.
- ¹¹³ A *ṣāṭ* is a cubic measure of varying magnitude [translator’s note].
- ¹¹⁴ *A‘lām al-Muwaqqī‘īn*, 3:12.
- ¹¹⁵ *Al-taṣriyah* is the practice of refraining from milking a she-camel, a cow or a she-goat for several days in order to give potential buyers the impression that the animal yields copious milk and, as a consequence, extract a higher price for it. In an agreed-upon hadith we read that, “If someone has purchased [such an animal], then after he has milked it he has the choice of either keeping it or returning it to its original owner together with a *ṣāṭ* of dates.”
- ¹¹⁶ *A‘lām al-Muwaqqī‘īn*, 3:13.
- ¹¹⁷ *Istijmār* is the practice of cleaning one’s private parts with stones after elimination [translator’s note].
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.14.
- ¹¹⁹ See al-Dardīrī’s *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*, and al-Dasūqī’s marginal commentary thereon, 4:502.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid; see also Ibn Rushd’s *al-Bayān wa al-Taḥṣīl*, 2:430.
- ¹²¹ ‘Āridat al-Aḥwadhbī, 3:192, and *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 304.
- ¹²² *Al-Bayān wa al-Taḥṣīl*, 2:366.
- ¹²³ Ibid., 2:192.
- ¹²⁴ Ashhab Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 145 AH/762 AC) was a companion of Imam Mālik’s who succeeded him in giving leadership to the Malikite school in Egypt [translator’s note].
- ¹²⁵ ‘Āridhat al-Aḥwadhbī, 3:192.
- ¹²⁶ As has been pointed out earlier, it is not permissible for forms of worship, which are *ta‘abbudī* in nature, to be employed as the basis for *qiyās* [translator’s note].
- ¹²⁷ *Al-Muwattā’*, 1:280.
- ¹²⁸ The group referred to here as *ahl al-ra’y* (literally, “those with a point of view”) represented a school of thought which relied on rational inquiry and interpretation in their approach to jurisprudence and Islamic Law [translator’s note].
- ¹²⁹ *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 10:113.

- ¹³⁰ *Al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 8:179.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., 181.
- ¹³² ‘Āridat al-Aḥwadhbī, 3:172.
- ¹³³ That is, one of her unmarriageable male relatives, such as a brother, uncle, etc. [translator’s note].
- ¹³⁴ ‘Āridat al-Aḥwadhbī, 5:118.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p.119.
- ¹³⁶ *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:5-15.
- ¹³⁷ This phrase appears to contradict what was said immediately before this, namely, that it is universals, not particulars, which constitute the fundamentals of the Law; however, this is how the text reads [translator’s note].
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., 3:15-26.
- ¹³⁹ *Naqd Maqāl*, p.100.
- ¹⁴⁰ The phrase rendered ‘challenge’ here (*al-ṭa‘n ‘an*) is unclear, since the preposition normally used with the verb *Ta‘ana* is ‘alā or ‘fi, not ‘an [translator’s note].
- ¹⁴¹ *Al-Intiqā‘*, p.149.
- ¹⁴² For examples of particular objectives of the Law which favor the imposition of restrictions on the degree to which one may act in accordance with his legitimate rights, see Fathi al-Durayni, *al-Haqq wa Madā Sultan al-Dawlah fi Taqyīdihī*, particularly Chapter 8.
- ¹⁴³ For further clarifications of these situations, see al-Zuhayli’s book, *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, 4:32-38.
- ¹⁴⁴ Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā‘ī and Imam Aḥmad.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Sahīḥ Muslim*.
- ¹⁴⁶ By blight, for example, hail, locusts, or some other natural disaster [translator’s note].
- ¹⁴⁷ The issue here, of course, is the matter of fairness, and whose responsibility it is to bear the cost resulting from damage to produce after it has been purchased through a legal contract. There may appear to be some contradiction between the fact that, on one hand, the Prophet instructed sellers to provide compensation to buyers for crops which, after the sale, had suffered some sort of damage, and on the other, his denial of the purchaser’s right to demand such compensation. It bears noting, however, that al-Azharī, narrating on the authority of al-Shāfi‘ī, states that sellers are under no obligation to compensate buyers for damage to crops after they have been sold; therefore, he concludes that the Prophet’s instructions to provide such compensation were most likely not an outright command but, rather, an exhortation to generosity and kindness. Ibn al-Athīr likewise affirms that according to most jurisprudents, the provision of such compensation has been viewed as a recommended

- action rather than as an obligation [translator's note; see *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under *jā’iḥah*].
- 148 Narrated by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī, and Ibn Mājah, the wording being that found in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- 149 Or, at least, as Imam Aḥmad once said, “I am aware of none who disagree...”
- 150 *Al-Muṣṭaṣfā*, 1:311.
- 151 *Al-Mankhūl*, p.355.
- 152 Ibid., p.364.
- 153 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:39. Special mention is made of the Shafi‘ites here since they are known for their denial of the validity of unrestricted interests; as was noted in an earlier discussion, Imam al-Shāfi‘ī had reservations about the concept.
- 154 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:40.
- 155 Ibid., 4:206.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 *Dawābiṭ al-Maṣlahah*, 216ff. Al-Buti stipulates that in order for a given human interest to be recognized, it must: (1) be consistent with the objectives of the Lawgiver, (2) not violate the teachings of the Qur’ān, (3) not conflict with the contents of the Sunnah, and (4) not conflict with the results of *qiyyās*, or analogical deduction.
- 158 *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, 2:220.
- 159 *Tajdīd Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, p.24.
- 160 That is, due to favoritism, kinship, friendship, bribery, etc.
- 161 *Al-Mīyār*, 11:126.
- 162 See *al-Mīyār*, 11:131, *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, pp.49-50, and *al-Itiṣām*, 2:121-123.
- 163 Al-Qaḍī Abū ‘Umar Ibn Manzūr, ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad, was one of Andalusia’s most prominent muftis, many of whose fatwas are quoted by al-Wansharīs in *al-Mīyār*. Some of these fatwas bear dates falling within the first third of the 8th Century AH. One of these fatwas, dated 20 Dhū al-Hijjah, 735 AH, contains a reference to the fact that he had dictated it to a clerk due to an illness which had rendered him incapable of writing for himself (*al-Mīyār*, 3:176).
- 164 The term *rikāz* refers to treasures found buried underground, be they minerals or cash, and whose owner is unidentified [translator's note].
- 165 *Al-Mīyār*, 11:127-128.
- 166 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 3:162.
- 167 Ibid., p.196.
- 168 An agreed-upon hadith.
- 169 This is the account recorded in *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, 1:363.
- 170 Narrated by Muslim, al-Bukhārī and others.

171 Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 4:97.

172 Al-Qurṭubī, commentary on the Qur'an, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 4:110.

173 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:97.

174 The term *muhṣan*, which means literally, “protected” or “fortified,” is used to refer to someone who is married, that is, whose circumstances fortify him against falling into adultery [translator's note].

175 *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 4:98.

176 Ibid, p.232.

177 Narrated by Muslim.

178 *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 11:310-311.

CONCLUSION

1 *Wujhat Nazar*, pp.249-250, p.300.

2 *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyah*, p.8.

3 Including, for example, Ujayl al-Namashi (*Majallat al-Shari'ah wa al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah*, No. 2, College of Islamic Law, Kuwait University).

4 From his introduction to *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1:5.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS*

Āḥād: Solitary hadiths. A solitary hadith is a report narrated on the authority of the Prophet by one or more individuals, but whose chain of transmission does not fulfill the requirements of *tawātur*. (*Tawātur* see below).

Bay^c al-‘Aynah: Sale on credit; a transaction in which an item is sold on credit for one price, after which the person who originally sold it buys it back in cash from the person to whom he sold it for a lower price.

Bay^c al-Gharar: A term referring to a transaction involving buying and selling in which there is an element of uncertainty concerning the price, the merchandise being purchased, the deadline for payment and/or delivery, or the ability to deliver the merchandise.

Faqīh (pl., *fuqahā'*): A scholar of Islamic jurisprudence who concerns himself with the details of Islamic legal rulings and their legal bases.

Fatwa (pl., *fatāwā*): A formal legal opinion issued by a *mufti*, that is, a qualified scholar of jurisprudence, based on a question posed to him.

Fiqh: The study and application of Islamic legal rulings as based upon detailed evidence; the corpus of practical legal rulings in Islam.

* The definitions in this glossary are drawn for the most part from the following two sources: Sano Koutoub Moustapha, *Mu‘jam Muṣṭalaḥāt Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Arabī-Inkilīzī* (Concordance of Jurisprudence Fundamentals Terminology), (Syria, Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2000) and Muḥammad Rawwās Qal’anjī, et. al., *Mu‘jam Lugħat al-Fuqahā'*, English-French-Arabic (Beirut: Dār al-Nafaes, 1996).

Damān: A guarantee; one type of guarantee under Islamic Law is the requirement that if Party A's property is damaged while in Party B's possession, Party B must restore to Party A something identical to the damaged object or, if this is not possible, its monetary value. Other types of guarantees are also detailed in Islamic Law for differing situations.

Hilah (pl., *ḥiyal*): Stratagem, artifice; an attempt to exploit that which is legitimate for an illegitimate purpose or aim; or, that which appears to be legitimate but is not.

Ijtihad: Independent reasoning. The effort exerted by a suitably qualified scholar of jurisprudence to arrive at an accurate conceptualization of the divine will based on Muslim legal sources (the Qur'an, the Hadith, analogical deduction and consensus) and the means by which to apply this will in a given age and under given circumstances; as such, ijtihad is the effort exerted by such a scholar to derive a legal ruling from Muslim legal sources, and to reach certainty on questions of an ambiguous nature.

Shādhīb: Irregular statements; statements which are in conflict with those made by the majority of jurisprudents.

Istidlāl: The literal meaning of the term *istidlāl* is to seek evidence (*dalīl*). In the context of Islamic Law, it is the pursuit of legal evidence, be it textual or otherwise, on the basis of which one may arrive at a sound ruling or judgment on this or that question or situation.

Al-Istidlāl al-Mursal: Unrestricted reasoning; reasoning or argumentation based on unrestricted interests.

Istihsān: Juristic preference. A decision, in the process of arriving at a legal decision, to refrain from applying to a given situation the same ruling which has been applied to analogous situations in favor of another ruling which is more in keeping with the higher objectives of the Law. In other words, juristic preference involves giving human interests and the objectives of the Law priority over the results of *qiyās*, or analogical deduction.

Istislāḥ: Reasoning based on unrestricted interests. The practice of issuing a legal ruling concerning a case which is not mentioned explicitly in any authoritative Islamic legal text and on which there is no consensus, based on consideration for an unrestricted interest (see below, *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*).

Jam^c: ‘Union,’ ‘gathering together’ or ‘all-comprehensiveness’. A term used in the realm of Sufism to refer to a spiritual state in which the individual has so fully concentrated himself or herself on the Divine that he/she is no longer aware of any separation between the Divine and the created.

Khul^c: Divorce at the instance of the wife in return for a monetary compensation paid to the husband.

Li‘ān: Oath of condemnation. Disavowal of paternity by mutual oath of both spouses (resorted to by the husband in refutation of an accusation of *qadhf^a* by his wife, and by the wife in refutation of an accusation of adultery by her husband).

Maqāsid (sing. *Maqsad*): Literally, ‘objectives’ or ‘purposes,’ this term is frequently used alone to refer to the higher objectives of Islamic Law in general, that is, *maqāsid al-Shari‘ah*.

Al-Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah: Unrestricted interests (sometimes referred to also as public interests). Interests which are not explicitly identified by any text in the Qur‘an or Sunnah but which are generally agreed upon based on circumstances which arise in human society. Examples of unrestricted interests include the paving of roads, the setting up of administrative offices to handle public needs, the use of traffic signals, the construction of sewers and waste disposal facilities, etc.

Al-Mu‘āṭāh: Fixed price sale; a transaction in which the buyer gives the price of the merchandise to the seller and the seller gives the merchandise to the buyer without uttering words to indicate either an offer or acceptance.

Al-Munaṣabah: ‘Appropriateness.’ The description of a situation in which a legal ruling and the situation upon which it is based are ‘appropriate’ to each other in such a way that the ruling leads to the preservation of an interest which is explicitly recognized in the source texts for Islamic Law (i.e., the Qur‘an and the Sunnah) and is supported by *ijmā^c*, or the consensus of the Muslim community. An example of ‘appropriateness’ would be the prohibition of alcoholic beverages (legal ruling) based on the fact that such beverages cause inebriation (the situation upon which the ruling is based), where the interest being preserved through the prohibition is the preservation of one’s faculty of reason.

Mutawātirah: See *tawātur* below.

Nikāh al-Muḥallil: A marriage in which a man weds a woman who has been

divorced irrevocably by another man with the intention of divorcing her in order that her first husband may marry her again (in view of the ruling in Islam which forbids a man to remarry a woman whom he has divorced irrevocably unless she has, in the meantime, been married to someone else and divorced).

Nikāh al-Shighār: Marriage by compensation. The practice in which a man gives his daughter in marriage to another man on the condition that the other man will give him his daughter in marriage, and with the understanding that neither bride will receive a dowry. This is a form of marriage which was prevalent in pre-Islamic times, and which Islam abolished.

Qadhb. Falsely accusing someone of sexual misconduct.

Qirād: ‘Sleeping partnership.’ An agreement between two people on the basis of which one of them will supply the funds while the other will undertake the work, after which whatever profits accrue will be shared by both; however, any loss is to be borne by the person who supplied the funds.

Qiyās: Analogical deduction. The practice of basing a new legal ruling on a previous ruling concerning a similar case, given the similarity between the two cases with respect to their underlying basis or occasion (*‘illah*).

Rafidites, or rejectionists: A sect of Shi‘ites who approve the practice of defaming the Companions. They were first referred to as Rafidites (Arabic, *Rawāfiḍ*, sing., *Rāfiḍah*) because they rejected their imam, Zayd ibn ‘Alī when he forbid them to insult Abū Bakr and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Sadd al-Dharā’i‘: The prohibition of evasive legal devices, or of anything which has the potential of leading to that which is forbidden.

Siwāk: A small stick used for cleaning and polishing the teeth.

Ta‘abbud/ta‘abbudi: Meaning literally, devotion or worship. Those commands or rulings in Islamic Law for which one cannot arrive at an explanation through human reason, and for which there is no known basis or occasion. Examples of such rulings include the number of *rak‘abs* of which the various ritual prayers consist, the prescribed punishments for violations such as sexual misconduct and slander, etc.

Ta‘hlīl: The process of identifying the basis (*‘illah*) for a given legal ruling, and/or the situation out of which such a ruling arose.

Ta‘rīd: Innuendo.

Tawātur, or **tawātur al-khabar**: The report of an event by a group of individuals sufficiently large and disparate that it would be impossible for them to have colluded in falsification.

Tayammum: Waterless ablutions. The practice of wiping the face and hands with clean earth, dust or sand with the intention of achieving ritual purity. See Qur'an 4:43 and 5:6.

Unrestricted interests: See *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah* above.

Uṣūlī (pl., *uṣūliyyūn/uṣūliyyīn*): A scholar who devotes himself to the study of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*).

Uṣūl al-Fiqh: The principles or fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence.

Al-Zāhiriyyah: A literalist Islamic legal school, founded in 9th Century Iraq by Dāwūd Khalf and later championed by Ibn Ḥazm, which insists on strict adherence to the literal or apparent meaning (*zāhir*) of the Qur'an and Hadith as the only source of Muslim Law.

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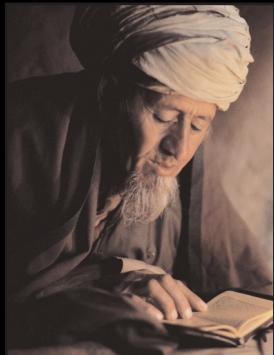
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With the end of the early Islamic period, Muslim scholars came to sense that a rift had begun to emerge between the teachings and principles of Islam and Muslims' daily reality and practices. The most important means by which scholars sought to restore the intimate contact between Muslims and the Qur'an was to study the objectives of Islam, the causes behind Islamic legal rulings and the intentions and goals underlying the Shari'ah, or Islamic Law. They made it clear that every legal ruling in Islam has a function which it performs, an aim which it realizes, a cause, be it explicit or implicit, and an intention which it seeks to fulfill, and all of this in order to realize benefit to human beings or to ward off harm or corruption. They showed how these intentions, and higher objectives might at times be contained explicitly in the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while at other times, scholars might bring them to light by means of independent reasoning based on their understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah within a framework of time and space.

This book represents a pioneering contribution presenting a comprehensive theory of the objectives of Islamic Law in its various aspects, as well as a painstaking study of objectives-based thought as pioneered by the father of objectives-based jurisprudence, Imam Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī; in addition, the author presents us with an important study of al-Shāṭibī himself which offers a wealth of new, beneficial information about the life, thought and method of this venerable imam.

This volume is an excellent study of the ideas of al-Shāṭibī presented in an accessible language to help specialists and inform the ordinary interested reader. The author is a notable scholar and the work is a valuable addition to the literature on Islamic Law in the English language.

Professor Zaki Badawi, Dean, The Muslim College.

*Al-Raysuni sheds light on al-Shāṭibī's inductive method, demonstrating both its value and importance. Sound approaches to understanding the Qur'an and Sunnah are promoted in particular by the author's discussion of the issue of *ta'lil*, that is, the practice of identifying the causes underlying Islamic Law and its rulings.*

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